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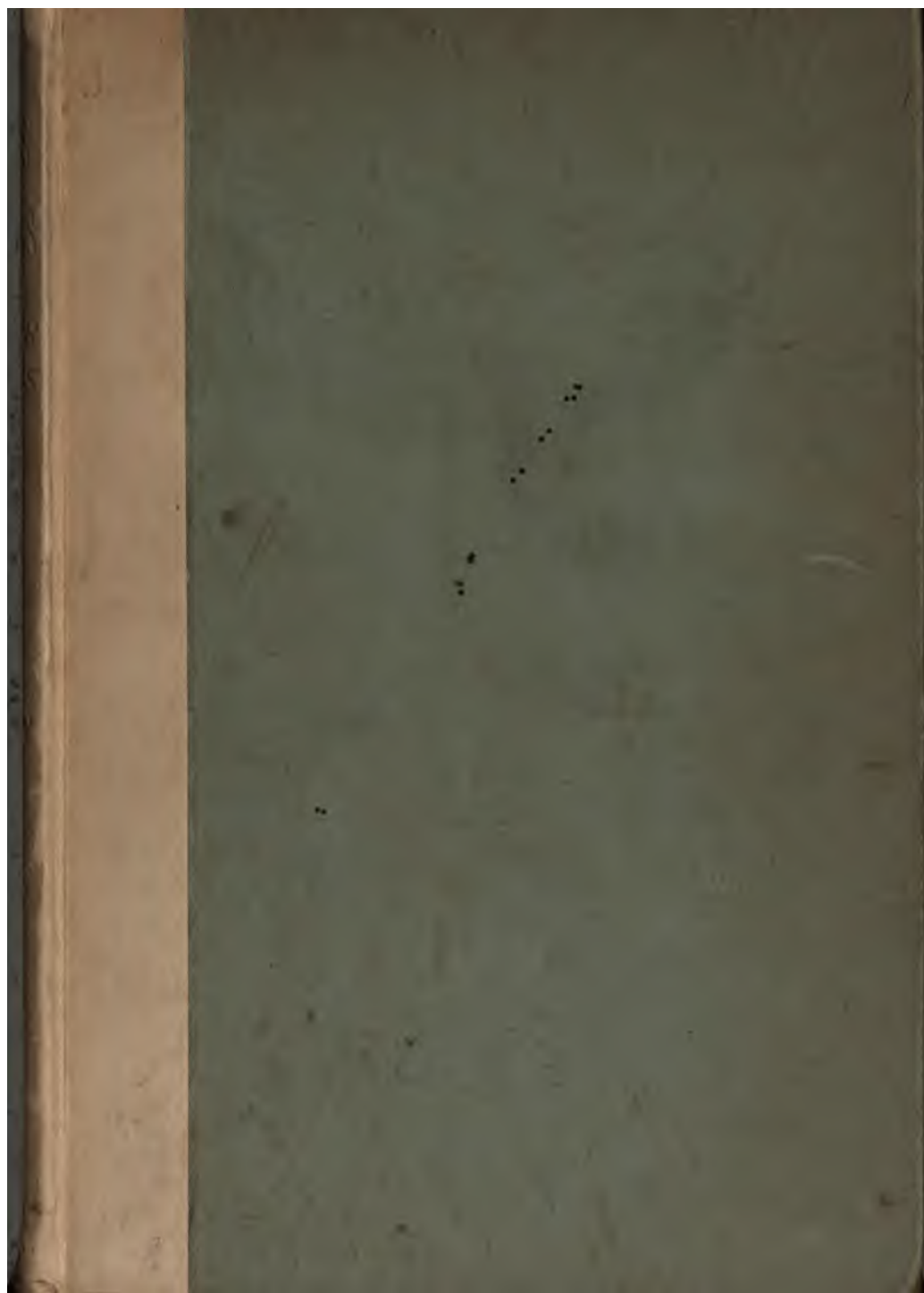
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A LIFE'S IDYLLS

AND OTHER POEMS.

A LIFE'S IDYLLS

AND

OTHER POEMS

BY

HUGH CONWAY

BRISTOL

J. W. ARROWSMITH, 11 QUAY STREET

LONDON

SIMPKIN, MARSHALL & Co., 4 STATIONERS' HALL COURT

1887

1887

J.W. ARROWSMITH
*Printer
and
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DEDICATORY.

Be these songs worthy or worthless, there is one who will value them for the singer's sake. To her I give them.

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A Life's Idylls.

MEETING.

Buds, pink and white, along the hedge
Had opened one by one ;
The meadow grass grown long and ripe ;
The mowers' toil begun,
The day she passed, with mien demure,
Between me and the sun.

Where, idly under cloudless skies,
With cloudless heart I lay,
Yet lacking something, knowing not
What thing to wish or pray,
Though soft the cuckoo's charm, and sweet
The scent of new-mown hay ;—

And there, with dreamy lids, I lounged,
So still, the birds grew bold,
And butterflies basked on the flowers
With painted charms unrolled ;
And sordid bees swept careless by
With wealth of honey-gold ;—

Till clicked a gate, the rusty hinge
Creaked in a warning tone,
And then I watched across the grass
A girlish shadow thrown,
And then I saw the sweetest eyes
That ever met my own.

She came, a bonny lass, and clad
In Summer's gauzy gear,
White, save that near her dimpled chin
A rose gleamed red and rare,
And, truant from the golden knot,
Strayed one long tress of hair.

My eyes met hers—ah, did a blush
With her fair cheek make free?
Was Love a prophet, whispering
Some words of things to be?
Did echoes answer in her heart
The thoughts that spoke in me?

A moment more, the lashes long
My eager glances shun:—
The shaft was sped, she little knew
How well its work was done:—
She passed away,—methought she bore
Some brightness from the sun.

Ah, then I knew what lacked the rose
To make its perfume sweet,
What note was wanting in the song
To make the charm complete;

Love touched the strings, and with the earth
My heart one measure beat.

Long hours that night I watched the moon
Speed o'er the starry plain ;
Then slept, because my heart in dreams
Her image might retain ;
And sleeping, said, " To-morrow come,
When we may meet again."

LOVE.

In those old days,
When all the world lay wrapped in mystic dream
Too sweet to break—when, glad, my heart went
 forth,
Because I loved, to bird and bud : because
The present bright with sun, and, seen afar
Through purple haze, the future promised fair,
Then I could sing, and so I sang this wise :—

Let her come to me rich with dower,
 Red gold to swell our store,
Let her give me in some sweet hour
 Herself and nothing more,
If only her heart's best love I share,
 'Tis little my care shall be,
For the gold that gleams in my lady's hair
 Is wealth enough for me.

The bird that carols above in mirth
 May fail in his merry lay,
And melody leave the mourning earth,
 And music lose its sway,
Let every song from the world depart,
 'Tis little my care shall be,
For my lady's voice as it thrills my heart
 Is music enough for me.

If the sun that reddens the sea to-night
Sinks, never to rise again,
If the stars should tremble and lose their light
And the pallid moon should wane,
Let a gloom for ever enwrap the skies,
'Tis little my care shall be,
For the light that shines from my lady's eyes
Will brighten the world for me.

WED.

An old grey church;—the ivy trails
From stone to stone, and lichen lies
On every mouldering ledge, and veils
The wicked gurgoyles' leering eyes;
Through painted saints the sunbeams fall,
And jealous of the shade inside,
Throw gaudy hues upon the wall;—
And here I wait my love, my bride.

Haste, love,—the tardy hour creeps on,
Each weary moment holds a day:
The fluted pillars one by one
I count, to while the time away;
The records of forgotten grief
On marble slabs I slowly scan;
Haste, love,—the longest life is brief,
Waste not a second from its span!

Glad welcome down the shady aisles
The organ breathes in music sweet;
I see kind faces bright with smiles
I hear the tread of dainty feet,—
A dream, perchance, the morn will chase;
Yet if I dream, therein is blent,
With rustling silk and floating lace,
The orange blossom's subtle scent.

White-robed she comes, my love, my own,
Yet purer than the robe she wears ;
White flowers she holds, the fairest known,
Yet sweeter than the flowers she bears :—
So white, so sweet, yet I could seek
And find, beneath that white veil hid,
Love's hue upon that gentle cheek,
Love's light beneath that long-fringed lid.

The timid eyes, the lashes' droop,
The solemn vow, the accents low,
The fervent prayer, the golden hoop,
To link our lives for weal or woe ;
The hurried kiss our troth to seal,
The few soft tears she needs must shed,
Then loud and clear the merry peal
Of bridal bells, and we are wed !

Clash out, brave bells ! Ring far and wide,
And laugh the piping birds to scorn.
Fair kinsmen, kiss the bonny bride,
She wanders far with me this morn :
And if her eyes are dim with tears
I grudge them not their tender rain,
My love can chase the misty fears
And kiss the sunshine back again.

HOME.

THE threshold, hand in hand, we crost ;
Her lips just moved as if in prayer,
So soft the tender words were lost,
Yet could my heart her accents hear,
And echo back, " Love, may this door
All sorrow bar for evermore."

From room to room she gaily sped,
And praised the taste that decked them all,
The well-worn books, her rivals dread,
The simple pictures on the wall ;
Then paused and lightly on me bent
Looks, mingling love and sweet content.

A modest home :—to left and right
Stretched lines of houses, grey and dull ;
And near us, beating day and night,
A city's heart without a lull ;
And ever sounding down the street
The hurried tread of busy feet.

A thousand roofs around us there,
With human hearts each roof below ;

Hearts tossed as ours by hope or fear ;
Hearts moved as ours by weal or woe ;
We were but units in the strife,
Leaves floating down the stream of life.

And yet we dreamed, in those sweet days,
That Love had marked us for his own :
He came to us and dwelt always ;
We knew his secrets ; we alone
His subtle lore might understand—
No love like ours in all the land !

I wondered how my flower could bloom
In such a desert, bare and bleak ;
And if the city's sombre gloom
Would pale the roses on her cheek ;
And if those eyes the sun had kissed
Would dim beneath the cloud and mist.

She could not, as in days of old,
Her curtain draw at morn and view
The fields ablaze with green and gold,
The garden gay with every hue ;
Or, stepping forth, in triumph bear
A creamy bud to deck her hair ;—

She could not lie beneath the shade
Of fragrant boughs at summer noon,
And idly dream, whilst o'er her played
The eager rays of sunny June,
And strove to pierce her hiding-place
To gaze upon her sweet young face ;—

She could not watch the sea at eve
 Grow splendid in the ruddy west ;
Or weeping twilight die and leave
 Bright tears upon the rose's breast ;
Or hear melodious down the vale
The passion-pleading nightingale ;—

But she could love ; ay, let the skies
 Be clear or cloudy, grey or blue,
A sun shone ever in her eyes,
 Piercing the deepest shadows through,
And showed behind bright days to come,—
And this was love, and this our home.

THE FIRST-BORN.

Love, though I found you so fair, so fair ;
Sweet as a maiden, sweet as a wife :
Come joy or sorrow, yet proud to share
The sun and shade of a chequered life :
Since that day when over the sward you sped,
With your brow unruffled, your bosom free,
Since love was whispered, since lives were wed,
Brightest, and truest, and best to me ;—

Fairest I thought you—most sweet and dear,
When, lightly stealing with timid tread,
From a lonely vigil of doubt and fear
I came and looked in your eyes, and read
The deep, deep love in your heart that day
When coral-tipped fingers your hand caressed,
As weary, but happy, so still you lay
With a tiny head on your tender breast.

A new heart fashioned, with joy or pain
To beat as all others ; a stainless soul
Given to mar, or, it may be, train
With tender care to a noble goal ;
A strange, sweet pleasure, till now unknown,
A new-born love in our hearts to rise ;
Yet, purer and brighter for this, my own,
The old love lives in our constant eyes.

For a sunshine of welcome lies on her lips,
Mingled with rapture and wonderment ;
And her fingers, wandering from coral tips,
Nestle in mine with a crowned content :
Her soft, pale cheek on my cheek is lain
As gently she whispers, " To you and me
This gift, to rivet our love and chain
Our lives yet closer, if that could be."

WORK.

To ~~work~~ is the doom of men,
To work with the hand or brain,
With hammer, or spade, or pen,
To work, be it loss or gain;
For the Power that called us to breathe and live
Has linked us with labour's chain.

King, or peasant, or priest,
Rulers of men or minds,
The greatest, firm as the least,
This chain of labour binds,
And sure as the sun his daily task
Fresh to his hand he finds.

I work by the midnight oil
Till the night and morning meet,
And fear rides fast on the toil,
And spurs me with pitiless feet,—
The fear lest the hand or the brain should fail;
I work for the bread we eat.

Failure hangs over my head
Like a two-edged sword, and bare,—
The future clouded by dread,
The present dark with care—
So dark that we hail in faintest gleam
A promise of morning fair.

I work, and, mute, through the night,
She watches, sweet wife, by my side,
And now and again, as I seek the flight
Of fancy fluttering wide,
She raises her eyes, and they meet my own,
Constant with love and pride.

Till the labour at last may end,
Till the weary hand may stay :
The last thought fashioned, the last word penned,
As the dying fire-gleams play,
And well-won slumber may come and chase
The hopes and fears of the day.

It may not be ever so—
The future a prize may hold ;
On her loving face, with hope aglow,
I gaze, and my heart is bold ;
So, hey for the bonny bright time, sweet wife,
When the work shall win the gold !

LOST.

I HEARD a ballad once—half song, half moan,—
But when or where my ear its accents caught
I know not, nor whose dismal monotone
Echoes to-day through black-draped halls of
thought.

Nor can my memory from time recall
The language wedded to the doleful strain ;
I know the words were sad, and simple all,
And, “Lost! lost! lost!” the wearisome refrain.

At night this dreary rhythm beats my brain,
Till grief is numbed and slumber creeps therein ;
At morn I wake and Sorrow calls again,
And with the hopeless words the days begin.

“Lost!—lost!” The mighty grief, I dared not
guess,
Someonespokeonce,with tearful whisper hushed.
From brow so white I clipped one golden tress ;
Ah, when I stole the first how red she blushed !

See, here the golden ring I gently drew
From her cold hand—poor little hand, so white
And wan—as, bending down, “Sweet love, adieu!”
I whispered, turned away, and all was night.

Upon her breast a snowy rose I laid,
No purer than the silent heart beneath :
A red rose on her lips,—“ Dear one,” I said,
“ This flower, Love's chosen one, I give to Death.”

Dark, dark the world I turned to—all alone
Save pale-browed Sorrow waiting at my side.
Can I forget ! To me she was as sun,
No cloud of time her memory can hide.

Each simple household treasure, held so dear
For sake of happy memories it bore,
Brings back again a hundred thoughts of her,
Each thought a key to open Sorrow's door :—

The little fineries that lie about,
Small skilful mysteries of silk and lace,
With nimble hands and shining threads wrought
out ;
Sweet tasks of leisure hours and dainty grace ;—

Her music lying useless—dusty now
Those ivory keys where whiter fingers strayed,
As scraps of dear old ballads, chaunted low,
Rose softly through the twilight's dreamy
shade ;—

And here the book just read, or just begun
But never finished—see, she marked the place ;—
A bud we tended spreading in the sun ;
I vowed that bloom her silky hair should grace.

Rang through the house, but now, a muffled chime
Of infant laughter, stifled in its birth,
On little lips, just tutored for the time
To shape of sadness, knowing not its worth.

Oh, better far those little hearts were lain
Cold, cold by hers:—that eyes now gay and
bright
Were sleeping too! Ah me, whose care shall train
Those tender lives or lead their feet aright?

I cannot pray—my lips would only frame
A prayer that death may linger not too long:
I can but mourn, and link to one loved name
The dismal burden of that dreary song.

Yet I may live, it may be fifty years!
Is love we long for worth the bitter cost?
The few years' happiness—the scalding tears
Of love left weeping lonely? “Lost! lost! lost!”

LONG AFTER.

I FANCIED, in that gloom of pain,
When, black, a blight lay on the hearth,
Though lips might fashion outward mirth,
My heart would never smile again.

And yet, with listless eyes, and slow
To quit the mournful shades of night,
At last I woke, and rays of light
Shone, struggling through the mists of woe.

And years pass on—the leaves unfold,
Spring after Spring; and swelling buds
Break warm with colour, and the woods
Die glorious with Autumnal gold;

And brightly yet the sunshine plays,
And cool and fresh the rain-drops fall,
And, from the trees, the wild birds call
Melodious as in old sweet days;

And earth has prizes to be won,
Brave fields to fight, great deeds to do,
True blows to strike: ah, love, that you
Were at my side to cheer me on!

Calm lies upon my heart once more,
This world is sweet, if not so sweet,
Dead love, as when our happy feet
Together trod its path of yore.

And somewhat yet of love is here,
For, sauntering 'neath the chestnut's shade,
A stripling tall, a comely maid
Are with me, and their lives are dear.

And watching them, around me rise
Faint echoes of the by-gone joys :—
The girl speaks with her mother's voice,
The boy smiles with his mother's eyes.

FEATHER AND RIBBON.

THIS is an eagle's feather ;
Under my feet it lies,
Tells of a nest where the cliff's tall crest
Rises to meet the skies.
I bind it fast in my plume, and say,
" High overhead be the nest to-day ;
If a foot may tread on the dizzy way,
I will dare and win the prize."

This is a knot of ribbon,
Precious to me alone ;
It fell last night from a bosom white—
Fell, or, it may be, thrown.
I press the shred to my lips and swear,
Proud as I know her, a queen and fair,
If an arm may do or a heart may dare,
I will claim her love as my own.

Laughs in his eyrie the eagle,
Wrapt in a misty shroud ;
And the path to my love on her height above
Is hidden by storm and cloud :
Some day I will win my way to her breast,
Some day I will harry the eagle's nest
And carry the plumage his strong wings drest,
A gift to my lady proud.

DEAD BY THE WAY!

If a man go down where the sword-blades ring,
Let the cause he drew for be wrong or right,
The laurels he lies on may soothe the sting,
Red flushes of glory may death make light,
Honour may rest on his forehead pale,
His foes may praise him, his friends may pray,—
But sad is his fate if a man must fail
On the march to the battle, and die by the way.

One who prayed, perchance, for the stricken field,
Who marched in sadness, in want, distrest;
Yet knowing the weapons his soul could wield
Might shear a feather from Fame's tall crest;
Whose heart by the watchfire at night but yearned
For the toilsome march of the coming day,
Who failed, as his body a traitor turned,
Fell out of Life's column and died by the way.

I knew such a man : he was nobler than I,
Great truths lay deep in his steadfast eyes;
I saw, from the battle he longed to try,
He comes, a leader of men, or dies.

There were mighty deeds that his spirit bore,
And words that his lips were fain to say ;
But the path was steep and by weeds grown o'er,—
He faltered, he staggered, he died by the way.

I saw him sink on the dusty road
With the dead and dying, a ghastly throng ;
I may have lightened the heavy load
He carried, a little,—my arms were strong.
My bosom echoed his last faint sigh ;
But, war is war, and the trumpets bray,
And we march, though the best and the bravest lie
Unnamed, unnoticed—just dead by the way.

Had I raised a stone that might bear his name,
What good ?—I was nameless as well as he :
'Tis the deeds that are done swell the notes of Fame,
Not those we dream of and yet to be.
I could but cover his sweet still face,
And marvel his heart so calmly lay,
And pray, as I stepped to the ranks in my place,
I might fall in the battle, and not by the way.

That was years ago : I have fought since then
Where Death finds many, and Fame but few ;
Though my rank be low, with the sons of men
I have struck some blows that I felt were true :
Now, a nameless end seems a little thing,
In the fast-locked ranks where death's arrows play,
And the shaft that shall slay me will lack the sting
Of his dreary fate as he died by the way.

But fate may be weaving the laurels yet ;
For life means hoping, but death is death,
And cheeks may be pallid, and eyelids wet,
And the leaves be stirred by my passing breath :
So, again I say, if a man go down
In the surge of battle, the foam of fray,
Weep for him not ; let our sighs be thrown
For the heart that could conquer, but dies on the
way.

THE TEST.

Now, should you find me lie, at dawn,
With pulses still, and colour fled ;
With waxen features pinched and drawn,
Say not, " This man is dead,"

Until my lady draws anear
And, gazing in my vacant eyes,
Shall softly whisper, " I am here,
O love, awake, arise ;"

Until, as leaning o'er my face,
Her golden hair shall touch my own ;
Until her fingers interlace
My fingers, nerveless grown ;

Until her hand, so soft and white,
She lays upon my whiter brow,
And cries, " Awake, the sun is bright—
Ah, love, I love thee now !"

Until her sorrow slays disdain,
And, bending down with tenderness,
Those red lips, craved so long in vain,
My pallid lips shall press.

Then, if I start not from my sleep,
With pale cheeks flushing warm and red,
Let friends who love me, wail and weep,
For I, indeed, am dead !

LOYOLA AT MONTSERRAT.

"Renouncing the pursuit of arms, he tore himself from home and his friends. He retired in the garb of a beggar to the celebrated monastery of Montserrat, where, on the vigil of the Feast of the Annunciation in 1522, he hung up his arms, as at once a votive offering significant of his renunciation of the works of the flesh, and an emblem of his entire devotion to the spiritual warfare to which he was from that moment vowed."

* * * * *

"The outline of Montserrat is most fantastic—cones, pyramids, buttresses, nine-pins, sugarloaves, are here jumbled by Nature in a sportive mood.

"The pious Catalonians aver that it was thus riven at the Crucifixion."

Now, God forgive me!—as my fingers close,
 With lingering pressure, loth to bid farewell,
 Around this well-worn hilt; and as I see
 Blue gleams and sullen from the trusty steel,
 And poise once more the balanced, supple blade
 Thus sheathed for ever; ah! sweet God, forgive
 If through my heart sweeps one rebellious throb,
 Desire unmortified, and if I long
 A little, but a little, for one day
 Again of that hot life, lived ere I fled
 The earthly battlefields.

Though I have prayed
 And kept the weary vigils of the night,

And fasted—yea, until these wasted limbs,
Firm once and corded with the nervous knots
Of strength, a child might conquer,—still the taint
Of earth is on my soul. Ah! what avails
The spirit bending with the ceaseless prayer,
The body broken with the gnawing fast,
Or wearing these vain rags, foul badge of false
Humility, when self-wrought weakness craves
For strength to sin, and self-worked poverty
To shine again in silk and win the world
With gold and bravery?

God! judge me not
In anger, if, above the peal of praise,
I seem to hear loud ringing from without,
The din of stirring battle, sword from sword
Fierce music beating; if the floating scent,
Thrown from the censer, changes to the fumes
Of sullen fight, that, dense and sulphur-charged,
Creep sickly o'er the field, and curtain death,
Till lifting slowly leave the trodden sward
Hideous with blood. O God! the candles pale,
The altar fades; I see Thy Son's sweet face
Grow sad and stern; rings out the holy chaunt
Loud as a war-song, and again I stand
In Pampeluna's breach, knee pressing knee,
Blade grinding blade of foeman; overhead,
Through battle mist the mighty flag of Spain
Floating defiant! Yea, and I would bear
The wounds again, or pass those weary months
In idle anguish, for one short hour's play
In that fierce strife.

Do I repine, turn back,—
 I, chosen God's own soldier ; newly girt
 With nobler weapon than the failing steel
 With higher purpose than the keen hot lust
 To slay ? Give not the ranks of our sweet Lord
 Full scope for knightly prowess ? Wear not hate
 And unbelief as tough a mail as yet
 Has tried the temper of an earthly sword ?

* * * * *

See, I am willing now. Yet bid me not
 To fret the pavement of a hermit's cell
 With knees in weary prayers of self-reproach
 For ever bent ; or rain the bitter tears
 On one small spot of ground, till, dying there,
 A few dull peasants gape around and say,
 " This man was holy," and the crumbling bones
 Win honour, working after death the good
 I would have wrought in life. Nay, send me forth,
 A voice to plead for love and holiness,
 To raise the fallen, to bid the sure good speed ;
 A clarion ringing out Thy battle-cry
 Amid the scowling ranks of unbelief ;
 A herald fair to bid the vanquished foe
 Come in and sue for mercy and for peace ;
 A martyr, if my feet may worthy be
 So near Thy cross to tread. Ah me, I sin
 Again—not mine to choose ; my will be Thine !

* * * * *

Yet pity me, fair Christ ; the world You left,
 Despised, condemned You ; yet the parting throes
 Of Your last agony this mountain tore

In wild confusion : peak on peak upreared,
Crag fell on crag ; and pond'rous masses, fixed
Immovable since called from chaos dark,
Like wind-swept fir trees tossed and trembled,
 swayed
By mighty pangs that rent the earth.

But I—

I quit a world I found so fair, so bright ;
So warm with sun, so fresh with ardent youth,
And cut with many a path I hoped would lead
To heights of Fame ;—I leave my love ; her eyes
Shone kind and true, if not so kind and true
As shine the Virgin Mother's. Pity me,
If my poor heart is rent. Farewell, sweet sword !
Lord, I am Thine !

SONG—IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN !

I HEAR it in the throble's note,
It sounds through rustling trees,
From rippling waves sad echoes float
Adown the sighing breeze.
And you, my love, the first, the last,
My love for time to be,
Do voices haunt you from the past
And whisper mournfully,
"It might have been !"

The years pass on, but never heal
The wounds that throb and pain ;
Our hands may meet and eyes may steal
To once-loved eyes again :
O love, my love, the first, the last,
My love for time to be,
Will your sad eyes be overcast
And echo back to me,
"It might have been !"

FOR LOVE OR FAME.

Love rightly chose the singer's words,
Love strung his harp and softly swept
His fingers o'er the trembling chords
Till music wakened, pleaded, wept.
Love's brightest garments all things clad—
The birds, the flowers, the blue above;
Yea, all the world for Love was glad,
And so the singer sang of Love.

Of Love the loss, of Love the gain,
Of Love that hopes, of Love that waits
He sang, till birds around were fain
To learn his lore, to woo their mates.
At last he paused and turned to find
An echo to his sweet refrain
In eyes he loved : adown the wind
Wailed one sad note, and song was slain.

His dream was o'er ; he knew the breast
Of her he loved and longed to sway
No thröb of rising love distrest,
No answering note was there : it lay
Calm as yon lake. Her eyes' pure rays
Shone coldly as the morning star,
And followed with a dreamy gaze
Some truant fancy soaring far.

A soft wind, whispering tenderly,
With trembling leaves toyed overhead ;
A dying rose-bloom fluttered free ;
Across the lake a ripple sped ;
And o'er the lady's calm face past
A flush, then lips were lightly curled
In scorn, as errant thoughts at last
Flew back and settled in the world.

"Sweet sir," she said, "a worthless task
To tune your harp to idle lays
Through summer hours. I dare to ask
To whom the good, what worth the praise ?
Ah ! were I man and could attain
The wealth of words a poet dreams,
My harp should sound a grander strain,
My song should rise to nobler themes.

"Are all the great deeds men have wrought,
The pure, the good, the brave, the strong,
Yet sung ? Holds earthly passion nought
Save love to stir the soul to song ?
Are these things worth your while to scorn,
The poet's crown, the deathless name
From age to age on music borne ?
Go, poet, forth and sing for Fame !

"Yea, sing for Fame, whose arms outspread
Are strong to raise and glad to greet
Those worthy, who may dauntless tread
Her rugged paths with steadfast feet.

Ah ! he who wins her smiles aright,
In Love's soft lists no lance need break,
But, stooping from the starry height,
The prize he needeth deign to take."

She ceased, and flew each bitter word
Swift as an arrow to his soul,
Barbed with her scorn, and sharply spurred
His spirit to a higher goal.
With trembling hands aside he cast
His sweet-toned harp, and sadly said,
"So may it be ; Love's day is past,
Let laurels bloom and Love be dead."

Time past—the deeds that never die,
With mighty voice, the poet sang,
Till peals of welcome, loud and high,
World-wide from Fame's bright clarion rang ;
Or so, at least, the lady thought ;
For soft she spake, with wistful eyes,
"Ah ! crave you now the love once sought ?
O love, bend down and take the prize !"

Time testeth all—and men forget
The measure of his solemn strain,
Whilst in our hearts vibrating yet
The songs he sang for Love remain.
O poet, blest in heart and name,
Earth's flowers and laurels interwove,—
To sing for Love and conquer Fame,
To sing for Fame and conquer Love !

DEADLY NIGHTSHADE.

AN evil plant with an evil name,
A sombre flower of a sullen hue;
Do you wonder much why I hold the same?
Shall I tell you where it grew?

You scarce would guess it—at Père la Chaise,
Where a street of tombs stretched, white and fair
As living hands for the dead can raise;
A city of wreaths and prayer.

Yet the sweet sad peace of the place was marred
By a gruesome sight, as my feet drew near
To a long grey stone, lying stained and scarred
By the strokes of each passing year,

Grey and neglected. A broken rail
Half girt it, bending and red with rust;
And even the letters, once deep, now fail
To speak of forgotten dust.

Scattered by time, on the tomb yet lie
Some fragments left of a broken wreath,
Saying that some one in years gone by
Had mourned for the heart beneath.

Darkly, a cluster of nettles green
Their rank plumes waved o'er the heart that slept;
And, fell as a snake with its purple sheen,
Through the leaves the nightshade crept.

Then I whispered sadly, "This stone lies bare,
Yet its fellows around it with blossoms glow;
Was there never a dead man a flower could spare
Over brother dust to grow?"

"Could never a seed in the autumn say,
As here and there on the soft breeze borne,
'This spot is naked; ah! let me stay
And cover this grave forlorn?'"

Then I thought—What manner of man lies here?
What was his station, what was his fame?
How may it be that his grave is drear,
Lacking both love and a name?

He lived, no doubt, as we live each one;
He loved, he hated, aspired or fell;
And the end is here, in a lichened stone
With never a word to tell!

Or perhaps men said, as they laid him low,
Weighed down by the granite, "Depart, depart,
Your life wrought ill"—and the dark leaves grow
From the root of a baneful heart.

Well, I only know he is gone and dead,
 Whatever his merits, whatever his due ;
That a clump of nettles grows at his head,
 With the nightshade stealing through.

So I turn and ask: If I died to-day,
 Though friends may weep me and flowers may
 fling,
When the tears are dry and the stone grown grey,
 What flower from *my* heart would spring ?

Now you know why I hold it here—
 And sad it makes me this flower to see.
Throw it way—for the sun shines clear,
 He was nothing to you or me !

RUTH.

THE world is fair and rich this morn,
With Autumn's gifts thrown far and free :
Glad in the sun the ripened corn
Smiles at our feet, a golden sea,
Where leafy shores on either side
Slope down to meet the welcome tide ;

Across, the breezes lightly play,
And gaily bear from shore to shore
Bright billows, rich with bearded spray,
Waves, crested with a golden store
Of grain that bows its heavy head
And longs to hear the reapers' tread ;

And, timidly, as though oppressed
By wealth around, above them spread,
Sweet flowers, in robes of azure dressed,
Peep out ; and here the poppies red
Gleam through the gold, as thickly set
As rubies in a coronet.

Oh, would that I of this fair land
Were lord, and as the reapers bound
The mighty sheaves, could proudly stand
And view the wealth that sprang around,
And praise the yield, and count the worth
And bless the gifts of mother Earth !

And you, on timid feet, more fair
Than she who in the days of old
Came, with the sunshine on her hair,
To win some waifs of harvest gold,
Might stand with downcast eyes and bright,
As seeking favour in my sight ;

Not gay, as now, in silken guise,
But simply clad in humble gear :
Love, I should turn and meet your eyes
Half glad with hope, half grave with fear,
Yet bright with gleams that just confess
A knowledge of their loveliness.

Ah! then, no measured stint were mine
Of grain doled out at close of day :
My life, my wealth, my all were thine,—
“Take these and hold,” my heart would say;
And asking but with thee to share
The one sweet fruit that love may bear.

An idle dream of sunny hours :
My land is rugged, hard to till ;
Yet one rich field is ever ours,
And Love's bright harvest waits us still—
Thick lie the ears of corn he leaves.
Sweet, let us glean among Love's sheaves !

SINTRAM.

TO — (A REPLY).

Shedding some placid tears, the son knelt before his mother, kissed her flowing garments through the grating, and felt as if in Paradise, where every wish and every care is hushed. "Beloved mother," said he, "let me become a holy man as thou art a holy woman. Then will I betake myself to the cloister yonder."

"That would be a sweet, quietly happy life, my good child," replied the Lady Verena, "but such is not thy vocation. Thou must remain a bold powerful Knight, and thou must spend thy long life, which is almost always granted to us children of the North, in succouring the weak, in keeping down the lawless." — *Vide* "SINTRAM," DE LA MOTTE FOUQUÉ."

AND so, my friend, at last you sigh for rest ;
 Hope's sails are shaking in the blasts of fear ;
 Your strong soul-armour failing at the test,
 You deem the world is wrong and out of gear,

And say that Evil waxeth strong and great ;
 You fear to fall, and long in cloisters dim,
 With awe-struck heart, to pray and watch and wait
 Till God shall choose to call your life to Him—

To wait, with empty eyes and sluggish brain ;
 To nurse your soul and nip the buds therein
 Of earthly thoughts, that busy minds disdain,
 And call this petty warfare crushing sin ;

Not seeking God amid the restless strife
Good yet with Evil holds ; to stand away,
With rusting sword, from battle-fields of life,
Yet dare to claim the guerdon of the fray.

Strike in once more. Hark, loud the conflict calls !
All fare alike therein. Strive ; never fear
But he gets nearer God, who climbs and falls,
Than he who waits till God shall draw anear.

Some while ago these idle lines I penned,
How Sintram, wearied with the battle heat,
Longed, as you sadly long to-day, my friend,
To end his life in holy shades and sweet.

You know the tale : in years by-gone we read
This sad, strange legend of a mystic time,
And some sweet words still linger in my head ;
To you I give them, woven thus in rhyme :—

With face serene, yet lined and seared,
A reflex of the scars within,
The relics of that conflict weird
So bravely waged with Death and Sin,
Sir Sintram knelt. His dinted mail,
Touched by the sun-rays, glimmered red ;
Whilst, through the jealous bars, her veil,
Blown outwards, floated o'er his head,—

His mother, all unknown whilst years
His life had borne to manhood's goal ;
His mother, who had coined in prayers
Her life to pay for his lost soul !

Victorious now he meets her gaze,
And sees, in deep and solemn eyes,
Burn, clear from earth, those steadfast rays
That light the path to Paradise.

All down the cloister softly swells
Rich music, bearing on its wing
A dreamy joy that faintly tells
Of cadences the seraphs sing;
And o'er his storm-beat heart, and tried,
Swept one great wave of ecstasy,
The welcome herald of a tide
To flood his life in days to be.

“O mother mine,” he said, “O sweet,
O loved by me and loved by God,
To reach this height my wandering feet
A dreary way have slowly trod.
Though dear to me the peace I gain,
How hard the upward path appears!
Each stone is worn with tracks of pain,
Each step is wet with blood and tears.

“’Tis not whilst in the surge of fray,
We reck how near the spear-thrust sped,
How fierce the sword-blade’s deadly play,
How true the hissing arrow fled:
The field well won, we pause and rest;
Ah! then we view, with shortened breath,
The dinted mail, the shaven crest,
And know how near we stood to death!

“ And I have fought—it may be well,—
 No praise be mine if so it be ;—
I dread that combat fierce and fell
 To face again, and long to flee.
Oh, ceaseless strife ! Oh, endless task !
 Oh, days of weariness and woe !
Forgive me, if I dare to ask,
 Must God’s fair earth be ever so ?

“ Here all is sacred, sweet, and still,
 And quiet as each hoary stone ;
Here, as I kneel, the first faint thrill
 Of placid joy, till now unknown,
I feel. Ah ! let the cloisters’ shade
 Henceforward be my calm abode ;
I bid farewell to shield and blade,
 Forget the world and live for God.”

With eyes that shone as glad and clear
 As hers who, watching through a night
Of storm, beholds the day dawn fair,
 And clouds the blackest turn to light,
She smiled, she spake ; and he who heard
 Felt, soft vibrating through his breast,
The tender music of each word
 Soothe, as a child, his soul to rest.

“ A sweet, still life were this indeed,
 All pure with prayer and glad with praise,
And healing wounds that burn and bleed
 With restful nights and holy days,

And soaring heavenwards, as the scent
The swinging censer setteth free,
A life enwrapt in calm content,—
But not, good son, the life for thee.

“For see, some souls are faint and weak :
Though God may rightly choose that these
May waft them to the bliss they seek
With breath of prayer, o'er waveless seas ;
The strong must brave the bitter gales,
The crested waves of strife and pain,
Till splintered spars and riven sails
At last the longed-for haven gain.

“And can you think that He who gave
That iron hand, that dauntless heart,
The wit to war, the strength to brave,
Will hold thee to an idle part ?
Not thine the nobler strife to cease :
Go boldly forth where duty calls,
And peace shall come—but not the peace
That dwells within these silent walls.

“Forth, forth again, with flashing blade,
All purged from guilt, and clear from blood ;
The fall'n to raise, the weak to aid,
To smite the evil, cheer the good.
Meet once again the ranks of sin,
Till foes shall tremble at thy name ;
Fear not, your heart, at last, shall win
The lasting peace that victors claim.

“Through opening rifts of coming years
I see, fair son, how well and strong
Your soul the earthly armour bears—
We children of the North live long!
And, far away, my ear has caught,
Borne through the stars, glad strains that tell,
As God's own knight, how Sintram fought
And conquered Evil.—Fare-thee-well!”

SONG—GO NOT YET.

Love, go not yet : far, far way
Chimes faint the evening bell,
But loving lips are loth to say
The fatal words Fare-well,
That free your heart but leave to me
Sad eyes and lashes wet,
And dreams of bliss that may not be ;
Love, go not yet—ah, go not yet !

Love, go not yet : the western sky
In flames of crimson glows ;
Night's dewy tears fall silently
And mourn the sleeping rose ;
To-morrow, 'neath another sun,
Night's tears the flowers forget,
But I must weep alone, alone :—
Love, go not yet—ah, go not yet !

THREE DREAMS.

I DREAMED a dream of a rose,
A wonderful rose and rare ;
It might only bloom in a world grown free
Of sorrow, and sin, and care :
I woke, and its perfume passed with sleep,
And I knew that the snow on the earth lay deep,
And the roses died last year.

I dreamed a dream of a song,
A song from a true heart sped,
With noble thoughts of a great intent
To stirring music wed :
I woke, and though dimly a few strange words
Vibrated yet through my spirit's chords,
The soul of the song had fled.

I dreamed a dream of my love,
My beautiful love of old ;
Softly and shyly her hands once more
Nestle in mine and fold :
I woke, and fancied her accents low
Were lingering yet. Long, long ago
My love lay dead and cold.

THE GOLDEN ISLANDS.

"Where these Isles lie no man knoweth : it may be no man hath found them, or, finding them, hath been unwise enough to return to our lands of care and woe. Nathless, if we may credit the tales of the ancients, they do exist."—OLD MS.

"HEART !" I cried, "the quest is weary ; chaunt no more this idle measure,
Rhyme of poet's dreamy joyaunce ringing down the by-gone years ;
Turn, O heart, from idle longing—somewhat yet holds life of pleasure,
Flowers that bloom despite of shadow, smiles that break between the tears."

Answered then a voice within me—"Strive again, ere life be wasted.
Shall he find who never seeketh, shall he conquer who despairs ?
Earth holds lands no foot has trodden, earth holds bliss no heart has tasted,
And, perchance, the Golden Islands wait for him who seeks and dares."

A dream, I thought, an idle thing,
Fit ending to a day of gloom ;
Night softly lifts her sombre wing
And shows beneath a gaudy plume ;—
A dream, my heart has known such long,
All bright with glamour, sweet with song ;

And I shall wake too soon and find,
Though fled the dreamy song I heard,
Some sweet vibration lurks behind
From melodies that strangely stirred
My soul—then know the day is near,
And weep that morning breaks so drear.

And yet I mark the glowing wain
Shine overhead, soft, clear, and true ;
And at my feet the stars again
Are mirrored in the trembling blue ;
I hear the waters' flow and fall,
And far away a seabird's call.

And see, unless I dream to-night,
Ride buoyant on a gleaming tide
A magic skiff, and, edged with light,
Strange waves about her softly glide,
Leaving reluctantly, to pour
In rippling kisses on the shore.

A voice thrills through me. Standing near
Is one with tender eyes and grave ;
Eyes, free from passion, shining clear
With such pure rays methinks the wave
Should cease its homage to the skies,
And mirror only those sweet eyes.

“ O weird and strange the night,” she said,
“ And yet not wholly wrapped in fear.
Methought the gods long since had fled
This earth, yet marvels wait us here.

What means this magic sail and white?
Why meet we twain this mystic night?"

I spake: "Not mine the skill to read
Our fates. The quest for realms unknown
To this strange shore my footsteps lead.
To-night, perchance, the path is shown.
The skies are fair, our hearts are free;
Sweet, seek the Golden Isles with me.

"The Golden Isles! The golden dream!
Far, far away I see them sleep;
And catch, through jealous mists, a gleam
Of lustrous waters pure and deep,
Slow-gathering waves that break and shine
On shores of purple serpentine.

"No autumn there, no leaf to fade,
A lasting garb the roses don;
And sweeter for the sun, the shade,
And brighter for the shade, the sun.
Death cometh not to work his wrong,
And all is colour, scent, and song.

"Beneath the shade of glossy woods
Glow radiant flowers, a fragrant fire;
And, towering o'er the lesser buds,
The aloe throws a scented spire;
And soft the cadences that fall
From waters rippling musical.

"O'erhead floats many a lustrous bird
On dazzling wings 'neath cloudless blue;

And many a thrilling note is heard
Melodious the night-time through—
Song, striving midnight's spell to break
And move the sleeping rose to wake.

“A poet sang their loveliness
In fervent strains of fond desire ;
His meaning those alone may guess
Whose hearts may hold the self-same fire
That glowed within his soul and strung
His thrilling harp when days were young ;

“But we shall find them, you and I,
And know the joy the singer dreamed—
Bright, wondrous realms of ecstasy,
Lands fairer than his vision seemed,
All crowned with green and wreathed with flowers :
Sweet, shall we sail and make them ours ? ”

One moment poised 'twixt hope and doubt,
In mine she lightly lays her hand ;
On board we step, the sail blows out,
The water widens 'twixt the land,
No jealous wave our passage bars,
And forth we sail beneath the stars.

* * * * *

Hand claspt in hand, away, away,
Across an unknown sea we sailed,
Till morning clad the east in grey,
And kindly stars their sweet eyes veiled
In fear, as flushing through the skies
The banners of the sun arise.

Then sank the sun in red disdain,
Then stars crept forward timidly,
Then sun, then stars, then sun again
Threw gleams across a dancing sea,—
And still we sailed away, away,
Through starry night and sunny day.

We shaped no course, but onward drave,
The toy of every playful wind,
The sport of every romping wave ;
Hope lay before and fear behind ;
As breezes blew or currents bore,
On, on we sailed, and knew no more.

Till, wearied of the trackless blue,
The azure round without a break,
The waves that raced us as we flew,
The waves that foamed along our wake,
Eyes, listless grown, left sea and skies
To find new worlds in her dear eyes,

Plumb those clear depths and learn the worth
Of thoughts therein that dimly move,
Great thoughts awaiting gladsome birth
When quickened by the breath of Love,
And gaze till languor fled and gloom,
And hope threw forth another bloom.

Then lightly to my lips I drew
Lips not unwilling. Heart with heart
Beat one true rhythm. Ah ! we knew,
Come life, come death, no more apart

May throb those hearts that tenderly
Pledged troth upon the magic sea !

Now Love sailed with us. Ah ! no more
I swept the waters' circling rim
With straining eyes to sight a shore,
Whilst hope within grew faint and dim !
Her love so long my watch beguiles,
We might have passed the Golden Isles.

A weird strain floating down the breeze
At times fell strangely on the ear ;
" Ah ! these," she cries, " are magic seas ;
The mermaids sing ; O love, beware !"
I laugh : " Fear not the siren's lure
Can shake the heart when faith is pure."

At last, " What boots it thus to roam,"
I cried, " so long on this wild quest ?
The first fair land shall be our home,
And seeking hearts shall sleep and rest.
O love !—sweet love ! what unknown bliss
May match the rapture of this kiss ?"

And as I spake, behold a haze
Rolled off the sea, and near at hand
Lay gleaming in the morning rays,
Bright as a gem, a wondrous land.
" O love," she cried, " sail on, sail on ;
Methinks the Golden Isles are won !"

Then lightly, where a silver slope
Of sand ran down the wave to greet,

Our swift keel stayed, and strong with hope
Ashore we sprang, with eager feet ;
Still hand in hand, we inland passed
To win the mystic joys at last.

Afar, I saw the slender height
Of palm trees, waving, broadly crowned
With leafy fans ; strange flowers and bright
Their fragrant treasures cast around ;
And that weird song the soft air bore
That filled my dreamy nights of yore.

We near : alas ! the palm trees fade,
Green fans and fringes die away ;
In humbler garb the boughs arrayed ;
The song is but the wild bird's lay ;
The large flowers change and lose their glow,
Till shape and scent and name I know.

I turned and said : "At last I wake ;
Each flower I know, each bird, each tree.
Is love a dream ? Yet, for his sake,
Stay, sweet, a little time with me ;
Though I have dreamed these things to-day,
Oh, be the last to fade away !

"This land is but the land I knew
Before we sailed in that strange barque ;
The land where worthless blossoms grew,
Where night was sad and day was dark.
Lost, lost I deem the Golden Isle ;
Yet stay, dear love, a little while.

“For see, the sky is changed and fair,
And sun-rays bright around us fall,
And clearer now I seem to hear
The linnet’s song, the throstle’s call ;
And flowers, perchance, some blooms may bear
Not all unworthy of your hair.”

Soft laughter rippled in her voice,
But earnest love looked from her eyes :
“Oh, sorrow not,” she cried,—“rejoice !
Must I, then, teach you—you, the wise—
How that bright god with rosy wings
Makes true the dream your poet sings ?

“What though the glamour round us breaks,
It leaves us standing hand in hand,
Knit firm by Love, whose sweet spell makes
A Golden Isle of every land ;
We live, we love, the quest is done,
The Golden Islands reached and won !”

SONNET—LOVE AND SORROW.

I saw, light-footed, 'neath a fleckless sky,
Love chase the hours through sunny fields
and fair,
Flushing with joy like roses in his hair,
And only sad that flowers must fade and die ;
When, from a sombre wood that lay hard by
His sunny realms, on timid feet, anear,
Dark-vestured Sorrow, crowned with heavy
care,
Crept, gazing on Love's glory wistfully.
Love paused, compassionate at her great pain,
Leant o'er her, whispering, "See, the sun is
bright
And I am here ; O weary heart, arise !" .
And then they passed me, hand in hand the twain,
Love looking nobler, and a placid light
Breaking through cloudy deeps in Sorrow's
eyes.

SONG—REGRET.

THE sprays of woodbine shyly creep
The latticed wall along ;
The roses wake from wintry sleep,
The breeze is sweet with song ;
The path we loved is green with leaf,
And fresh from fleeting rain ;
O heart, my heart, forget the grief,
And blossom once again !
It may not be, the hopes of yore
Have died of weariness ;
O love, if you had loved me more,
Or I could love you less !

The fickle bird with merry strain
Can woo another bride ;
The stream forgets the icy chain
That bound its rippling tide ;
The sunny sky forgets the gloom,
The gloom of winter drear ;
The budding rose forgets the bloom,
The bloom that died last year :
Could I forget the vows we swore,
The words of tenderness ?
O love, if you had loved me more,
Or I could love you less !

MATCHED.

ONCE, once beneath a tender sky—
How long ago I dare not say—
We played a love-game, you and I,
For stakes we neither meant to pay.

Spring stooped and kissed the longing earth,
Earth gave in buds a welcome meet ;
The breezy air was full of mirth,
The woods with thrilling song were sweet ;

The hedges showed a wealth of leaves,
Green plumes of chestnut waved above,
The sparrows twittered in the eaves,
But we—we dared to jest with Love !

You came, a victor widely known,
And fair, and flushed with conquests scorned ;
I saw the challenge gaily thrown,
Stood forth to meet you, strong—and warned.

I feared you not ; between us two
This knowledge lay, you might not share,
That you were playing false, I knew,
Yet fancied I was playing fair.

With roses, ribbons, smiles we played,
With "grief to part " and "joy to meet,"
With whispers soft and half afraid,
With glances sideways thrown and sweet.

A deadly pastime, dearly learnt,
That many a one has cause to rue ;
For finger-tips are sometimes burnt ;
But we were wiser, I and you.

For if you gave your voice a thrill,
And if I lent my eyes a flame,
These were but tricks to test our skill,
And only counters in the game.

No harm—unless, as I believe,
I saw your bosom fall and rise
When, through the twilight dim, one eve
You gazed so deeply in my eyes.

Then, if within my eyes you spied
A gleam of love about to dawn,
And if, for once, you truly sighed,
I think our game was fairly drawn.

What might have been ! But here it ends :
I did not ask, you did not give ;
We parted on the morrow—"friends ;"
We cheated Love, and yet we live.

Now, should you say, in scorn or pride,
"I won his heart in years gone by ;
Yet lightly threw the gift aside,
As many another," then you lie.

Or should I plume myself, forsooth,
And say, "She waited for my grace,"
Then let my cheek blush red, and Truth,
With angry gesture, veil her face.

And yet—and yet, howe'er this be,
At times I turn with half regret,
And wonder, were we both as free,
And if we parted as we met.

And back my puzzled thoughts will flow
To those bright days, to those blue skies ;
Again I hear your accents low,
And wonder if our game was wise.

And if this thought has ever crossed
Your heart—a thought I vainly shun,
"We played, and though we neither lost,
How little more and both had won !"

TWO PICTURES.

No. I.

L'AMOUR FAIT PASSER LE TEMPS.

A CLOUDLESS sky and a glassy river,
A painted boat in a golden haze,
The lazy lilies around it quiver,
Rocked in the eddies the oar-blades raise :
Love is rowing, and bright the roses
Bind his forehead and twine his hair ;
Time is smiling, no wrath discloses :
Youth and maiden, the course is fair.

Eyes half hidden by mingled tresses,
Brown locks brightened by locks of gold,
Hand from hand claiming soft caresses,
Lips untired of the tale oft told.
Sing, sweet pair, for the sunny weather ;
Sing for Time, who can work no wrong ;
Sing for the blossoms your hands may gather,
Plucked from the tide as you float along.

Love still rowing : no cloud of sorrow
Over the river its shadow flings ;
Time still smiling ; his dark plumes borrow
Touches of colour from Love's gay wings :
All unheeded by youth or maiden,
Down the stream on the summer day,
Onward gliding, with rapture laden,
Love bears Time in his barque away.

No. II.

LE TEMPS FAIT PASSER L'AMOUR.

COLD grey clouds o'er a course grown dreary,
Mists are closing around them fast,
Shadows deepen and Love grows weary,
Time has taken the oars at last :
Strongly, swiftly the broad blades sweeping ;
Dark the scowl on his knitted brow :
Love lies pallid, all worn and weeping ;—
Youth and maiden, how fares it now ?

Lips are silent that love asserted,
Hearts lie barren that bore love's flowers,
Hands divided and eyes averted,
Lashes wet for the by-gone hours.
Weep, oh weep, for the summer dying,
For the day-dreams vanished, the bright sun set ;
Weep for the barque that is onward flying,
Leaving long ripples of vain regret.

Hands, grown useless, his sad eyes veiling,
Love lies vanquished, and weeps his wrong ;
Weeps that Time, o'er his power prevailing,
Triumphs with arms ever sure and strong.
Thus, with the rose-wreaths dead and scentless,
Tear-stained emblems of Love's lost sway,
Sweeping on, with a stroke relentless,
Time bears Love in his barque away !

THE SALON, PARIS,
June, 1878.

ON THE RIVER.

STRONG arms against the ebbing tide had swept ;
White hands had deftly steered the painted boat ;
The summer night beneath the willows crept,
As down the stream with listless oars they float.

She sang, " O love, in by-gone years
We tried our strength against life's stream ;
The course was dark with grief and fears,
And happiness we dared not dream
Would come at last. Our life, now full
Of joy, its barque may softly glide,
And lilies fair our hands may cull
On either side."

He said, " But years are lost : no joy
Can e'er give back the hours we miss
Of youth, that youth must needs destroy
To gain, at last, repose like this,—
To sadly crown with useless bays
A head that toil has turned to grey,—
To snatch from life some placid days,
And then away."

Again she sang, " The river flows
Through shade and sun to reach the sea :
Life's stream, perchance, that turbid rose,
Pellucid swells eternity.

O love, be brave ; for bright and clear,
 And widening through a pleasant land,
 Our river flows. The sea we'll near
 Hand locked in hand."

He said, "Yea, truly this the end,
 To idly drift where none may tell :
 One thing alone I comprehend
 On earth—it is, you love me well.
 We guess that unknown ocean fair,
 And trust the gods may leave us free
 To love. No Lethean draught could bear
 My love from thee."

Again she sang, "Where yonder light
 Gleams out from home, a beacon clear,
 I see eyes happy, young, and bright,
 And children's merry voices hear.
 Their shallops need no currents stem,
 Or battling with the waves be tossed :
 O love, at least we give to them
 Youth we have lost."

* * * * *

They moored the boat, and through the garden past,
 Rose-scented dewdrops falling as they brushed
 The branches ; crossing, hand in hand, at last,
 The threshold ; and his heart's sad murmur
 hushed,
 As young eyes met his own with trustful gaze,
 And welcome, kissing lips gave warm and glad.
 He thought—though hard the toil through many days
 And nights unknown, yet evening scarce is sad.

WHERE ?

WHERE are the flowers, O my love, I twined,
In days long dead, bright locks to wreathe,
When warmer the sunshine, methinks,—more kind
And sweet was borne on the summer wind
The fragrance the roses breathe ?

Where are the hopes, O my heart, that sprung
To crown the promise the day-dawn showed,
When night was distant, the morning young,
And a purple mist o'er the mid-day hung,
And golden the sunbeams glowed ?

Withered each rose that the wreath adorned ;
Faded and scentless—can only cling
Some few stray leaves which the years have scorned,
The last dead mourners whom none have mourned,
Held by a loosened string.

Faded each hope—and the tears lie wet
On eyes long turned from a fruitless strife—
Only remaining a sad regret,
A dream once dreamt I can ne'er forget,
Bound in a wasted life.

SONG—BETTER SO, LOVE !

WHEN the love, once shining brightly,
Fades away from careless eyes ;
When the chain, once worn so lightly,
Fretting on the bosom lies ;
Well it were that we should sever
Every link of long ago,
Than to wreck our lives for ever :
Better so, love ; better so !

Freedom given, freedom taken ;
Will there linger with us yet
Thoughts at idle times to waken
Dreary ghosts of vague regret ?
Or will Time, with soft voice soothing,
Bid our hearts forgetful grow,
And the old sweet love be nothing ?
Better so, love ; better so !

Only this, as words are spoken,
And you leave me, glad and free ;
Only this, as troth is broken,
Would I wish for you and me :
If our eyes shall meet hereafter,
Lips may whisper soft and low,
All forgiving, gay with laughter—
“ Better so ; ah, better so ! ”

ENDYMION ON LATMOS.

I WOULD that day might cease to be, and night
This world for ever wrap in gentle shade—
Shade, soft as creepeth now from vale to peak,
With stealthy whisper bidding trembling stars
Grow bold and shine. Ah! were it so, my soul
Might ever rest on that strange haunting dream,
Half love, half wonder; sweet as life to me,
Yet unattainable.

O Dian fair!

So white, so pure, methinks thy name alone
Breathed, throws a shadow on thy chastity,
As would a spotless virgin's faintest breath
Cloud on the polished surface of my shield.

And thus love finds me!—love, the flower we crave
From Heaven, and gods above have not disdained
To pluck from earth's warm soil. And I, forsooth,
Endymion—who might pass where yonder lights
Shine through the vale, and ask from rosy lips,
Not all unwilling, treasures prized by love—
Weep as a child for bliss I may not win;
And nights are short in dreaming this strange love,
And days are long in wishing for the night
To fall and bid the dream begin.

Ah, see!

She, Dian, breaks the net of sombre clouds
Triumphant. Now her splendour pales the stars
And casts long shadows on the sleeping earth.

Alas for love, she throws her radiant gifts
To me no more than to the world at large,
And hurrying upwards speeds her crescent car
Across a glittering sky.

Here let me rest,
On this grey stone, crowning the mountain peak,
The first to catch, the last to lose her rays,
Bathe in her brightness, dream, it may be die
Beneath the love those silvery kisses bring.

THE RANSOM.

If I could battle with Time to-night,
And conquer and fetter that foeman dread ;
Naming as ransom, the victor's right,
Some years he holds in the land of the dead ;
Love, tell me which would the soonest pay
The debt we claim from a vanquished foe :
Which of the jewels he has stolen away
Shall we take from the robber who spoils us so ?

For me, if the choice were mine, not those
Of childhood, though happiest deemed when age
Looks sadly back, as Life's chapters close,
To a bright tale told on an early page—
Reading the pleasure, perchance, too clear
Through faded grief ; yet, I know the twain
May lie in the heart of a child as near
As joy to sorrow in man's is lain.

Nor those would I claim, when the blood of youth
Throbb'd fiercely, stirred by the race to be ;
Though the visions they held were sweet, in truth,
And buds of promise sprang fair to see.
Ah, love ! would I waken again, and learn
How little we long for is won on earth ;
How the day-dreams vanish as life grows stern ;
And the fruit of the blossom, how small its worth.

Nay, give me those—we can count them, love,—
Made bright by those eyes now seeking mine,
Telling me, this is the loss to move
True hearts to grief at our life's decline :
Sweet years with scarcely a sore regret,
And dear to us both for the days they hold ;
Yet sad are our hearts,—we can never forget,
They are gone for ever, dead, dead and cold.

These are years, O my love, I claim ;
Years that have taught, if a man but dare
To reckon earth's glory an empty name,
If love but link it, this life is fair.
So, if Time would rise from his fetters free,
And move once more on his measured flight,
These years he has rifled from you and me
Are the ransom that loosens his chains to-night.

THE LEGEND OF THE GEM.

WHAT though she deigned to stoop and read
The love each look, each accent told ;
Noblesse oblige, that haughty creed,
From her grey eyes shone clear and cold ?
Yet had she known the strife that day
'Twixt pride and love that longed to speak,
She scarce that calm farewell would say
Without a blush on her pale cheek.

They sat where blossoms white and sweet
Hung overhead, a cloud of flowers,
And, stirred by breezes, at their feet
Threw summer snows in pearly showers.
The very leaves, he fancied, strove,
Falling, anear her feet to lie ;
And happy those, and blest by love,
That touched her as they dropped, to die.

To him it seemed the sun-rays bore
A richer gold for her sweet sake,
A brighter green the glad trees wore ;
And birds around, the woodlands wake

With clearer song ; and fragrance thrown
From roses lingered on the air.
Where all was glad, his heart alone
Dared not rejoice to find her fair.

He gazed on calm unclouded eyes,
And marvelled did she understand
How in his heart a fire could rise
By love unfed, by hope unfanned.
Then musingly, as though afar
She stood to whom his words were sped,
He spake—as one, when nought may bar
His fate, would hasten on its tread :—

“ The roses break from bud to bloom,
Then fade ; the days that dawned so fair,
Die tearful in a misty gloom ;
This world must light with darkness share ;
Our day-dreams vanish into night,
And one, more sweet than words may tell,
Half-framed by hope in future bright,
Fades as I form the word ‘ Farewell.’

“ Some moments yet are mine, and I
Hold these than years to be more dear ;
So let me dream till Time shall cry
‘ Awake, awake, the night is here ! ’
Then listen, lady : I would wreath
Some rhymes a legend old to twine.
If passion ’twixt the lines should breathe,
Remember, still the dream is mine.”

Was that a noontide cloud that strayed
Through golden pathways of the sun,
Or did regret a softer shade
Lend eyes too proud his eyes to shun ?
Did pallid roses, near her lain,
Contrasting, set her cheek aglow,
Or did she blush in her disdain ?
Howe'er it be, in accents low

He spake again : " My legend runs—
Long years ago, in some sweet land,
Where mists but rose from summer suns,
And warm south winds the myrtles fanned,
There lived a youth. Not untaught he
In gentle craft ; his heart would pore
O'er tales that rang of chivalrie,
O'er legends strange with ancient lore.

" He found, as many more must find,
Life ill-attuned to what he sought :
Let skies be clear, clouds lurk behind ;
In Joy's bright web is Sorrow wrought.
I know not if to love he turned,
Or that frail barque his spirit buoyed
With some glad days, but dearly earned
By years of happiness devoid ;

" But, reading where some mighty sage
His by-gone wisdom would impart,
Dim, woven in a mystic page,
A tale he found that thrilled his heart—

Of one strange gem that shone afar
In some fair land of fond desire,
And, vivid as a near-drawn star,
Flashed from its heart intensest fire.

“A band of gold its splendour graced ;
And in a tongue unknown to-day,
With letters quaint these words were traced—
WHO HOLDS ME HOLDETH BLISS FOR AYE.
And men affirm that he whose hand
That peerless gem shall hold and win,
An angel's joy may understand,
Or Adam's ere he fell to sin.

“Ah ! lady, need I sing how he,
Whose spirit craved for more than earth
Has power to give, scanned eagerly
This tale but fit to move our mirth ;
Or, when he deemed the legend true,
How dreamful were the days and dim,
What glad and wakeful nights he knew
As fancy flashed those rays on him ?

“Perchance in your sweet life, at times,
A wish has played through some dull hour
To rule in other, golden climes
Not won by beauty, rank, or power ;
Or it may be I judge you wrong,
And those cold realms o'er which you reign
Hold joys for which alone you long,
And life no higher boon may gain.

“ If so, you scarcely comprehend,
How he of whom I sing was fired
By thoughts of joy to know no end,
By dreams of pleasure never tired ;
Or why he quitted land and home,
And all he loved and held him dear,
On this mad quest to wildly roam,
With scarcely hope his heart to cheer.

“ What boots it, then, that I should draw
Some oft-told tale from memory's store,
Of countries strange the wanderer saw,
Of seas his restless barque swept o'er,
Of failing feet that longed for rest,
Of pride that spurred his steps anew,
Of hope still lingering in his breast
More cherished as it fainter grew ?

“ Suffice it—on one morn he came,
Borne by his barque that sailed at will,
To some green island none might name,
Engirt by magic seas and still.
And as his feet the white strand press,
A strange emotion softly speaks
And whispers to his heart's distress,
Here lies the magic gem he seeks.

“ And here he found the legend true :
Bright shone the jewel, yea as he dreamed ;
Fire-darts divine of vivid hue
Through night's dark circle strangely gleamed.

Alas! no mortal hand may bear
Its bliss—no foot the height may scale
Whence shot its rays! Grim spells lay there
At which the bravest born must quail.

“Encircling frowned a death-cold wall,
Reared ages back by force or sin,—
Repellant, heartless, cold to all
Save chosen ones who dwell within,—
And who the counter-spell may wield
And win the right those gates to pass,
And bid the stony warders yield?—
I deemed I knew it once—alas! .

“With that sad youth how fared it, then,
Who shaped for this one quest his life?
He may have sought the world again
And lost the dream in manhood’s strife;
He may have bound some lesser gem
Upon his brow to grace his lot,
Plucked earth’s pale flowers and joyed in them:
If so, my legend telleth not,

“For here it ends—the thread is spun,
And, lady, you may marvel much
That I, whose song your praise has won
Ere now, should waste my wit on such.
Of little worth the words, indeed;
Yet, deeper down, a meaning lies
Than dare I hope you choose to read,
As frowns are far from those sweet eyes.

“For I, like him, have craved in vain
Some higher boon than sons of men
Call happiness—my soul was fain
For bliss beyond the mortal ken.
Or so I thought, until this love,
If hopeless, taught my eyes to see
Your heart the gem for which I strove,
Yet ne’er, alas! to shine for me;—

“For me, who held erst-whiles the hope
That I, a poet, lowly born,
Made noble by my love, might cope
With ancient blood and ancient scorn.
Oh, better far had been in vain
My quest than find, O lady fair,
Your heart the bliss I may not gain,
Your love the jewel I may not wear!

“And yet I dare to say that earth
Might hold for us some nobler aim
Than best to show the pride of birth,
Or ring the notes of by-gone fame.
You answer not; yet clear to me,
Yea, more than scornful words could tell,
Your silence speaks: it may not be,
My dream is dead, and so—Farewell!

“O sweet! my love! the night draws near—
No answer—none! One moment yet,
And Hope’s bright sun, once shining clear,
Sinks, clouded by a dark regret:

One moment, and your lips must speak,
To ring for love its life or knell,
To make or mar this joy I seek.—
No answer! Ah! Farewell, farewell!"

* * * * *

He turned away. No word she spake
Save one "Adieu" that faintly came
From lips whence no resolve could take
A tremor as she breathed his name;
And if no throb were seen by him,
How could he guess her proud heart bled,
Or know, unless he saw them dim,
What inward tears her calm eyes shed?

They parted. Forth he went to fare
As all must fare, for ill or good;
And she her noble name may bear
Untinged with coarser, redder blood.
Though homage for her order meet
The years may bring, yet shall she say
No love by her was held so sweet
As thrilled the poet's song that day.

THE TIME SPIRIT.

ONWARD, onward the spirit pressing,
Saddened faces that glance behind ;
Sternly, coldly, the vanguard dressing,
Purblind leaders who lead the blind.
Feet seem lagging we once thought flying,
Hearts seem fainting once bold to dare :
Onward, onward, the age is crying ;
The spirit beckons, we know not where.

Shrines, once holy, from awe divested,
Crumbling ruins of by-gone creeds,
Logic has pierced them and reason tested,
Slain by dogma and judged by deeds.
Roofless temple and ruined altar,
Shines the sun through the ruins fair ;
Night may come, and our feet may falter,
Seeking for safety, we know not where.

Feet tread slowly, and wistful faces
Turn sad eyes to the rayless night,
Yearning to view in the gloomy places
Fiery pillars to lead aright.
Clouds above, and around us lying
Shoreless seas of a deep despair,
Feet seem lagging we once thought flying—
Onward, onward, we know not where.

Reason conquers, and faith has left us ;
 Changing phantoms are flocking round ;
Gods of science from God have reft us,
 Planted what in the holy ground ?
Faded faith, that we dare not gather ;
 Trees of knowlèdge, with branches bare ;
Taken our God, and we know not whither
 Lain—no angel to tell us where !

ROCK OR SAND.

CHANGES of time and of things—floods that have
hurtled past,
Surging to lofty places and sweeping kings away;
The shock of the foeman's charge; the force of the
tempest's blast,—
Old Church, you have stood them bravely; but
danger is dread to-day.

Hundreds of years gone over, and darkness turned
to light,
Since first through those lofty arches the solemn
music rolled,
When, fashioned to live for ever, you stood in
beauty and might,
The windows a blaze of colour, the altar rich
with gold.

Regal and stern came Henry—steel from an iron
race,
Wielding your sins as a weapon, grasping your
gold the while;

And the ~~Mass~~ and the monkish Latin fluttered
away in space,
And the strong true English accents rang sweetly
down the aisle.

Cromwell came as a whirlwind, scattering far and
wide
Priceless treasures of windows wrought by an
art long dead ;
And his sword-and-Bible troopers ranted at stiff-
necked pride
Till the pulpit groaned beneath them and the
rafters shook o'erhead.

Then a rest and a quiet—days of Geneva gowns,
Blind faith blindly trusted answered the heart's
desire ;
Orthodox parsons preaching hell-fire and heavenly
crowns
On Sundays, and happily hunting the rest of the
week with the squire.

Stirred then a spirit within you—a cry went forth
“ Awake ! ”
Quickened again in your bosom dogma and creed
that slept ;
Holy the priest and ascetic, whilst, here and there,
like a snake,
Long forgotten and subtle the scent of the
incense crept.

And the bonds we fancied broken again to our
hands you hold,
Wreathing with flowers the fetters that chafed
us in by-gone days;
Bright, alluring and polished, these new chains
wrought from the old,
And the links' hard clash is buried in a song of
thrilling praise.

Yet, as the spirit awoke you, others from dreams
arose,
And the cloudlet specking your sunshine, distant,
small as a hand,
Urged by a wind resistless, nearer and greater
grows,
Broadening, and deepening with shadow the
length and breadth of the land;

And minds of men, the thinkers, shaken with un-
solved doubt,
No longer the heretic's portion, the fire and
stake, appals;
Probing are they, and weighing—sifting and meting
out—
Testing each hoary buttress that holds the sacred
walls.

Hundreds of years gone over those massive towers
and grey,
Never their strength so needed, never the peril
so great;

For a cry from without is rising scornful and loud
to-day,
And the while you fight at the altar the foe is
fierce at the gate.

How will you meet the onslaught?—waiting with
bated breath?
Watching, praying and hoping miraculous things
befall? .
Circling around with trumpets, sounding a note of
faith,
Till the walls of the infidel strongholds reel at
the clarions' call?

Fight? Trust not to the weapons blunted in many
a fray;
The blade must be bright and trenchant this
foeman's pride to lower.
To this, every by-gone combat is nothing but
tourney-play;
For the world has grown to manhood, and the
arms of men have power.

Or will you fly—as a woman over the frozen plain
Flieth, as grows behind her the sound of a
gallop fleet,
Throwing, as faster and faster the wolves on her
traces gain,
Treasures, nearest and dearest, to hinder their
rapid feet?

Miracles, revelations, will you let them fall at your
need?

Cycles of endless torment God in His justice
shall give;

Catholic - faith - Athanasian — comforting man-
wrought creed!

Offspring dear to your bosom—will you cast
them aside and live?

However this thing may happen, not far need we
look to find

A world grown weary and careless of creeds that
bless or bann;

For the church that shall rule for ever, to loose
our souls or to bind,

Must stand on the rock of Reason—God's god-
like gift to man.

IS LIFE WORTH LIVING ?

I HOLD there is no man who knows,
Till comes that hour when eyelids pale
Shall flicker ere in death they close,
The worth of all things then to fail ;
That none this life may rightly prize,
Till death shall teach the eyes to see
The brightness of the day that flies,
The darkness of the night to be.

I hold, though many feel no sting
In death that comes alike to all,
And glad at Honour's feet may fling
Their lives, or give at Duty's call ;
Yet, could the last faint throbs be read
In those brave hearts as life is reft,
Though fear be gone and unknown dread
Be conquered, sad regret is left.

Is life worth living ? Ask the earth,
Our mother as the ancients tell ;
Her weeds may check the wheat-ear's birth ;
Once cleared, methinks she treats us well :
Or ask the wind, or ask the sea,
Sweeping the earth, if she be fair ;
And thoughts of man should soar as free,
And chains as light his spirit bear.

Is life worth living ? He who reads
In books of God not writ by pen,
May find his answer—not in deeds
Miraculous, once seen by men
Who sought for signs—but in the power
All Nature wields, yet may not pass,
Read love in every budding flower,
And mercy in each blade of grass.

Sad preachers those, whose heaven-turned eyes
Gaze far beyond this bright world's span,
And teach that men, to star-wards rise,
Must scorn what cometh sweet to man ;
That feet must tread, with steady trust,
Where Reason ne'er a pathway sees,
Through roads o'erlaid with doctrine dust,
To gates where creed shall turn the keys.

Shall nought of heaven be fashioned here ?
Shall joy but tempt our feet awrong ?
This strange, sweet life that none can spare,
Though pain with pleasure mingling throng.
Are all the prizes men must crave,
But lures to lead the feet astray ?
If this be life, the god who gave
Is scarce the God to whom I pray !

For me, I hold that men who live
With eyes turned earthwards, yet do well
For Right's own sake, nor simply strive
For hope of heaven or fear of hell,

Are dearer held for this by God
Than hermits who with holy tears
The caves have sought, or deserts trod,
Or mourned o'er Adam's fall for years.

A sad reply the thinkers find
To this sad thought of latter days—
Dark thunder-clouds are charged ; behind,
By few unseen, the lightning plays.
Is life worth living ? Holds it less
Of pain than joy ? We answer so :
“ As God in mercy made it—Yes ;
As doctrine reads God's mercy—No ! ”

SONNET—THE UNKNOWNABLE.

ON that great battle-field I rested, still,
Where creed with creed unending conflict
sought,
Priest-led, whose swords of faith alone have
fought
To hew their god in shape to suit their will ;
And, resting, thought of Paul, whose subtle skill
First in a tangled web of doctrine wrought
The simple gospel Christ had sweetly taught,
And heard his voice, with sonorous tones athrill,
Rebuke the men of Athens. Yet aright
I hold those cultured minds of ancient days,
Who on path of hidden truth had trod
Far as ourselves, still wandering in the night,
Who, bowed by awe and hope, can only raise
Our humble altars to the Unknown God.

A PRAYER OF THE TIME.

DARK in their misery, wild in their weeping,
Eighteen sad centuries backwards have fled,
Longing for sight of Thee—still art Thou sleeping !
Wake ere Thy sun sets in billows of red.

Bend down and listen and know Earth is aging ;
Leaves from the branches of Truth falling sere ;
Weary the battle the steadfast are waging ;
Surely the hour for Thine onset is near !

Bucklers that sheltered us, sword-blades we trusted,
Fail as we seek them to serve at our need ;
Armour we boasted of, useless and rusted ;
Faith we have leant upon bends like a reed.

Arrows of pitiless logic fly near us ;
Doubt, wisdom-winged, through the darkness is
hurled ;
Falters the strongest, and infidels jeer us—
God, shall Thy kingdom be lost in the world ?

Mighty and merciful, God, we have known Thee ;
Clad Thee in battle and goodness sublime :
Come with the power and the grace that enthrone
Thee,
Save us, the steadfast, whilst yet there is time !

God, lest we deem that Thy power is abating,
Shortened that arm which was mighty of old,
End in Thy mercy this doubting and waiting,
Show us the truth we may cherish and hold.

Thou who hast chained us with links never loosing,
Given us yet, for a purpose divine,
Reason, but food for that reason refusing,
We, like those others, would seek for a sign.

See, the winds shake us and bend us and sway us,
Weak hearts are fainting and ranks thinning fast ;
Battle may save us—come down and array us,
Come ere Thy legions are things of the past !

Girt them with glory, Thy Godhead revealing,
Saints be the captains to form us in line ;
Let the wild blast of the trumpet be pealing !
Show us, O God, in Thy mercy, a sign !

SONG—HAD WE BUT KNOWN!

WHEN, once, along this shore we came,
So light my heart that day,
The words of love your lips would frame
I gaily laughed away.
Had we but known, as, clear and blue,
The bright waves washed the shore,
How soon that sea would part us two,
Perchance to meet no more;
How soon beside the rippling wave
My step would fall alone,
Should we have parted gay or grave?
Had we but known! had we but known!

When, once, we watched the bright stars glow,
And in the eastern skies
Saw, gleaming like a silver bow,
The new-born moon arise;
Had we but known, as just "Good-bye"
You whispered low and sweet,
Hands parting then reluctantly
Again should never meet;
Perchance your eyes had sought and read
The truth within my own;
The words you wished I might have said,
Had we but known! had we but known!

TO —

THEY wrong you, dear, who say those queenly eyes
Are veiled by pride. Far down I look and know,
Unruffled, cold, although the surface lies,
Rich pearls of thought are hidden deep below.

Not bared to all, for lips to idly praise,
Or lightly mock with smiles of vapid mirth;
Guarded are they by seeming scornful gaze,
Free but to him whose wit may guess their worth.

Rare things and precious lie awaiting there
Till conquering Love shall those clear eyes
control,
And, troubling those sweet depths, shall gladly
share
The hidden treasures of your inmost soul.

As some fair book with mystic letter lined
My lore has read you, sweet,—Love gave the
key.
Ah! may I read therein, one day, and find
That power of loving changed to love for me!

A TRYST WITH DEATH.

I HAVE wandered far, where the fields, to-day,
Lie green 'neath the bright spring sky;
I have taken the paths where we used to stray—
My love, who is dead, and I:
And my thoughts flew back to the words we spoke,
Ere I sailed for the distant sea,
When last we stood by the giant oak,
And talked of the days to be.

We parted there, and our hearts were sad
With the bitter words—Good-bye;
Yet we said, "We will meet in the spring-time
glad"—
My love, who is dead, and I.
But Death swept down on the wintry blast
And claimed her heart as his own;
And now, when the blossoms are filling fast,
I walk through the fields alone.

Yet down to the aged oak I stray,
And rest 'neath its branches high;
For I know there are words that our hearts must
say—
My love, who is dead, and I:
And her voice comes soft on the sighing breeze,
• As I weep 'neath the trysting tree;
Then I know that in fairer fields than these.
You are waiting, O love, for me.

SWEET NOOKS.

GREY arches span the broadening tide,
And rippling from each time-worn pier
Long lines strike out on either side,
Where mimic whirlpools glance and glide,
Grow large and disappear.

With whisper low between the reeds,
And creeping softly, timidly,
Brook after brook the river feeds,
Until, full-grown, she gladly speeds
To greet her lord, the sea.

Though strong the river runs and deep,
By those who seek are often seen
Sweet nooks, where lazy waters creep,
Tired waves that snatch a moment's sleep
Beneath the branches green ;

Where willows bend to woo the stream,
And shadows on the stream reply ;
Where half-closed lilies lightly dream,
And, lulled by ripples, never deem
How swift the tide sweeps by.

Half dreaming, too, each wary trout
 'Neath hollowed banks securely hides,
Where floating grasses long stretched out
Are telling, as they sway about,
 Which way the current glides.

Grown broad with care and dark with woe,
 How many find the stream of life !
And yet, sweet love, some nooks we know,
Some hours serene, beside the flow
 Of worldly toil and strife ;

And here our hearts have often flown
 To dream some time from trouble free,
Where scent of roses, softly blown,
Floats o'er these places only known
 To Love, and you and me ;

Where Time is lost in sweet repose,
 And scarcely heeds us passing by,—
Yet all around the river flows.
O love, be secret ; ne'er disclose
 Where our sweet lilies lie !

FALKLAND AT NEWBURY, 1643.

Now which is wrong or right? Too glib we talk
Of "crop-eared knaves, malignants"—prate too
fast

Of "round-head rebels." Those who bid, to-day,
Defiance sullen to our haughty ranks
War not for pleasure, plunder, nor the fame
Sweet to a soldier. Nay, their hearts are moved
By some strange sense of wrong; the when or how
Perchance misunderstood, yet roused and strung
Till awe-struck homage and the right divine
Of kings are swept away before the blast
Of mighty anger, stirring to the depths
A people stern at Liberty assailed.

"The king can do no wrong!" Have I not seen
Fair treaties cancelled, regal oaths recalled;
The danger past that dragged from royal lips
The lulling words—and then, once more the need,
The promise made—and broken? Ay, until
My heart grew sick, and through a cloud of doubt
This thought would glimmer—"They are just,
these men,
And I should stand beside them, plead their cause,
And, if the bitter end at last must come,
Fall with them fighting."

Then around me closed
The iron bands of old tradition—rank
And order, knightly vows and fealty,

And, stronger yet, the love I bear my lord
 As fellow-man, not king. Again, I shrank
 From calling traitor Essex friend, or with
 The shifty Fairfax linking in my lot
 And name. Sure, if their cause be right,
 The tools it needs to shape it to its ends
 Are chosen strangely.

Yet, I dreamt last night,
 One came to me with starry eyes and clear,
 Reading the very doubts that swayed my soul,—
 A goddess, belted, armed. She grasped a sword—
 No slender blade, with handle gilt and gemmed,
 Meet for a courtier's side,—the steel she shook
 Was keen and stout as one might wish to hold
 When blows are thickly dealt, and ready hands
 Must guard the head. Outstretching it, she said,
 "Take this, and strike for England."

Then I asked,
 "Which England?"—Oh, the regal scorn that
 curled
 Her lip, as clear and cold the answer came:
 "There is but one—the people's. Take and
 strike!"

And, wavering, I reached, and then again
 Withdrew, and whispering the while, "The king
 Can do no wrong;" and her proud face I saw
 Grow stern and sad, and I awoke.

Ah! now
 The battle opens, and amid those ranks
 Sombre and sullen, waits, maybe, a point
 Meant for a foe, yet bearing to a friend
 A soldier's death to end a statesman's doubts.

*SONG—HALF-WAY ACROSS THE
WORLD.*

THE Southern Cross has slowly bent
And marks the waning night,
The air is faint with luscious scent,
The sea is edged with light ;
Though dies away the tropic breeze,
And ne'er a wave is curled,
Love yet can sail o'er magic seas
Half-way across the world.

The star o'erhead that richly glows
Meets not her tender eyes,
The flower is not the flower she knows
Beneath the Northern skies :
The star has caught the southern flame,
The flower strange hues unfurled ;
But Love shall ever be the same,
Half-way across the world.

PHANTOMS.

BRIGHT phantoms rose, a mystic throng,
 And, fighting hard for life, they said,
 "Oh, quicken us with breath of song!"
 With beating heart I paused, afraid,
 Knowing my rugged words untaught
 Must lack the garb to grace the thought.

I smiled and cried, "Be still, be still,
 Ye restless thoughts that throng and press;
 What time I win this unknown skill
 To clothe and hide your nakedness,
 Ah! then, with ready hands the gate
 I loose and speed you to your fate."

Alas! I dare to think I reach
 This end, and, haply, lips may hold
 Some wit of words, some skill of speech:
 "Come forth," I cry, "ye fancies old!"
 Ah me, the thoughts I deemed endowed
 With life lie dead, and need a shroud!

A YEAR AGO.

A YEAR ago, when the golden corn
Was gleaming in waves of light,
When the birds were merry at early morn
And the poppies red and bright,
Sadly he left me, my love so true ;
But none my tears might see,
For only the birds and the blossoms knew
The tale he told to me.

We parted sad ; but, " Sweetheart," he said,
" I go for my love to toil ;
Seasons may pass whilst my feet shall tread
Far, far on a foreign soil ;
When the fields are rich with golden grain,
And the busy sickles shine,
Then, rich or poor, I will come again
And reap this love of mine ! "

Oh, cold on my heart lay the wintry snows,
Dark, dark, spring's brightest day !
Oh, scentless, I thought, was the summer rose
My love so far away !
But autumn is here with its gifts in store
To lavish far and free,
Bringing the gold to the corn once more
And my own love back to me !

SONG—LOVE OUT A-MAYING.

WHEN Love went out a-maying,
Merrily O, merrily O !
With sunshine round him playing,
Merrily O, merrily O !
The birds were blithe his steps to greet,
The blossoms bent to kiss his feet,
The sky was blue, the breeze was sweet,
When Love went out a-maying,
Merrily O, merrily O !
When Love went out a-maying !

When Love went out a-maying,
Merrily O, merrily O !
A lad and lassie straying,
Merrily O, merrily O !
Love touched them lightly as he fled ;
His voice grew soft, her cheeks blushed red :
What need to tell the words they said,
When Love went out a-maying,
Merrily O, merrily O !
When Love went out a-maying !

When Love went out a-maying,
Merrily O, merrily O!
Bright eyes their joy betraying,
Merrily O, merrily O!
The lad and lassie looked so gay,
The gossips nod and smile and say,
“ These two will wed ere Christmas Day ;
For Love is out a-maying,
Merrily O, merrily O !
For Love is out a-maying ! ”

PHRYNE.

SHE pleaded not : but eloquent
On rose-red lips a moment played
Smiles bright as sunshine ; backwards bent,
One hand unloosed the silver braid
Binding her knotted hair, and free
Fell lightly down each happy tress—
A golden tide that reached her knee
In waves of rippling loveliness.

Upon her sparkling zone she placed
Deft fingers ; bade the clasps divide,—
Those golden warders of her waist,
Jealous of charms they fain would hide,—
Slid back her rich attire, and shone
Each shoulder, shapely, white and fair ;
And, dazzling as the noontide sun,
Her bosom's splendour met the air.

Fair as a flower that from the bud
Breaks, broadly scattering sweets concealed,
In her great loveliness she stood,
For all her beauty's wealth revealed,—
Stood, meeting thus each ardent gaze,
And brightening as a vivid flame,
Till hearts of men may only praise
Her beauty, and forget the shame.

The slender waist,—the queenly head,—
The arm, long, straight, and tapering white
To rose-tipped fingers half outspread,
To sue and half to claim the right
Her beauty gave,—the curving grace
Of supple neck and dimpled chin,—
And, over all, the wondrous face,
And eyes with magic light therein ;—

Could man be man and see unmoved
The daring deed, the sweet defence?
Hearts beat acquittal; passion proved
A stronger plea than innocence;
Stern brows unbent; the coldest eye
Grew kind with warmth she woke therein.
So Phryne triumphed. Rose the cry,
“Too fair is she—too sweet to sin!”

LOVE, LIFE, AND DEATH.

“L'amour donne une main à la vie, l'autre à la morte, et
cercle fatal est formé.”

'Tis said, Love giveth to Life one hand,
Whilst Death at the other is surely found :
Thus, firmly knit by the gods' command,
Love, Life, and Death for ever stand
In a mystic circle bound.

Thus, Life is planted 'twixt Death the chill
And Love the sunny, beneath whose breath
Life dares to blossom and fear no ill,
Forgetting, through Love, that one hand rests still
In the grasp of his playmate Death.

Is this so? Think, rather, so weary grew
Life, lonely ever on Death to gaze ;
And Death so wroth, as he claimed his due,
That Life but smiled as the arrow flew
To finish the joyless days.

The twain called Love in the round to share,
And clasped were the hands, no more to move :
Yet he lords it well o'er the mighty pair ;
For no life is life if Love be not there,
And no death can conquer Love !

SPRING SONG.

WAKE, love, wake—the lark sings loud ;
Through the mist the sun with might,
Hurling spears of golden light ;
Swiftly every fleecy cloud
Follows on the flying night.

Wake, while yet the day is young,
Ere the dews the flowers have fled,
Ere the morning breeze is dead,
Or the birds their matins sung
To the sun-god over head.

See ! the Spring has come again :
Leaf lies full on every tree,
Buds have set the blossoms free,
And the flowers begun their reign,
Smiling glad on you and me.

Blossoms fair our hands shall fill—
Primrose of the pallid hue,
And the bonny bells of blue,
Violet and daffodil,
With forget-me-not so true.

Sweet, can we be sad to-day ?
 If our hearts should dare to mourn,
 Why, the flowers would look forlorn,
 And the birds, now piping gay,
 Loudly sing melodious scorn.

Wake, love, wake—the longing flowers
 Raise their heads and look for thee,
 And the birds plead tenderly ;
 Wake, and win the sunny hours !
 Wake for Spring and Love and me !

"BETTER FOR BOTH."

"BETTER for both"—so your hand can write,
Without a tremor, these words, to say
That the vows we vowed and the troth we plight
Must perish and be at an end to-day—
That the love I felt and the love you feigned
For a little while in a day-dream reigned,
To fade with the dream away.

Better for *you*, had you only said,
I had echoed your words and known them true,
I had stamped them deep on a heart that bled;
Planted peace, perchance, where the red flower
grew;
Been glad that your sun might never know
The drifting clouds that my life o'erblow,—
Ah, better indeed for you!

Better for me—'tis another song,
And only one singer may learn the strain
Drawn from the chords when a life goes wrong,
That dreary dirge when a heart is slain,—
The song of spirits who long had slept,
Seeking the house that was garnished and swept
To enter in glee again.

Is it better for me I should upwards lift
My eyes and know that the world is fair,
Or that life on an aimless course should drift,
A rudderless barque on a sea of care ?
Is it better to strive for a meed of fame,
Or sink in the night with an unknown name
In the waves of a dark despair ?

Is it better to join in that dreary creed,
Man's faith is little and woman's less ;
Life's page with a cynical eye to read,
As an idle riddle not worth a guess,
Its best and brightest in scorn to hold,
To sneer at its honours, curse at its gold ?
You have dared to tell me, “ Yes.”

If this can pay for the joys I lose,
And clear the weeds from my heart's best growth ;
If I find the lot I am fain to choose
A thing to live for and not to loathe ;
If the gold comes back that my soul has spent,
Your words are the truth, I may rest content—
Better indeed for both !

TWO STREAMS.

FOAMING, noisy, and fleet ;
Eddies, waves, commotion ;
The East and the West Lyn meet
In their race to win the ocean.

A glorious dark-brown stream,
Stained by the peat it passes,
With here and there a gleam
Of gold in its dusky masses ;

Straightening the grassy flags
On the banks' projecting shoulders,
Sweeping round lichen'd crags,
Leaping the wave-worn boulders.

Just where the stream grows wide,
As wave meets wave assailing,
Hangs o'er the noisy tide
A bridge with a rustic railing.

Here, on a time, we two,
Swayed by the fates that move us,
Met when the skies were blue
And bright with sun above us.

Summer had come, I know ;
I fancy the rose was early,
For the bluebells made a show
And the fronds of the ferns were curly.

Down from the west you strayed,
I from the east descended ;
Careless, a youth and maid,
Which way our footsteps wended.

Somehow it happened so
Our thoughts afar had fluttered ;
Borne on the water's flow,
Or the song the mavis uttered.

Fortune had freaks to play,
But never a glimpse to show us
How our fates might meet that day,
Like the rapid streams below us.

You were thinking of—what ?
Scarcely, I fancy, sorrow ;
Something, perchance, forgot,
Something to do to-morrow.

But I—I strode along
With a poet's mien majestic,
 wooing the muse of song
To amours anapestic.

Whatever our fancies' flight,
Little our fate we reckoned
As we followed with footsteps light
The way the waters beckoned,

Till we stood where the rivers meet,
The bridge's length asunder ;
Till we heard each other's feet,
And raised our eyes in wonder.

Fragile the plank—your tread,
Dainty indeed, yet shook it ;
I offered a hand to aid—
You blushed, bowed, smiled, and took it.

A moment more, and you slip
Through the bracken under the beeches,
Before I could bring to lip
A word of my pretty speeches.

I watched as your light feet fled,
Fleet as the stream or fleeter,
And a love-lilt rang in head
Disturbing my classic metre.

And the wild flower caught the jest,
And the stream was loud with laughter,
And a bird flew off to her nest,
With a long straw trailing after.

How did it happen all,
How did the odd come even ?
Sweet, can this kiss recall,
Those days in leafy Devon ?

Next, when the bridge you cross
Did you find, where my hand had bound it,
A bud with a stem of moss
And a shred of silk around it ?

Did you wonder, with eyes downcast,
Why this gift and who was the giver ?
Did you pluck it to pieces at last
And toss it into the river ?

Did the story the bud revealed
Heighten your cheek's bright lustre ?
Did I watch you, myself concealed
Behind a hazel cluster ?

Did we meet, part, meet again
On the banks of the river roaming,
Till our smiles as we met said plain—
We look for each other's coming ;

Till our eyes told the truth so clear,
That Love, by their sunshine aided,
Bloomed with the rose, and fear
With the pallid primrose faded ;

Till I threw my fate on a word,
Yet waited with heart undaunted :
Low as you answered, I heard,
And the words were the words I wanted ?

Only a girl and a boy
With a wealth of love to squander,
We kissed, and our kiss was joy ;
We loved, and our love was wonder.

Anemones opened to stare
(They might have spared our blushes),
And we fancied a cunning air
Lurked in the throats of the thrushes.

Whispered the leaves, " Hey-day !
This is a match, don't doubt it ;"
And the birds on the branch were gay
As they sat and gossiped about it.

As I read to your willing ear
My reams of passionate rhyming,
The orchids shook with fear,
And the woodbine trembled climbing.

However Love laid his toils,
Easy the prey he netted :
He claimed our hearts as his spoils ;
We gave them, and never regretted.

The summers come and depart,
We fancy each year is fleeter ;
But your voice yet thrills my heart,
And your eyes were never sweeter.

Though life has its outs and ins,
Its cloudy and sunny weather,
The sight of those meeting Lys-
That linked our lives together

Brings to me that time of old
When Love from his ambush sallied ;
Turns tresses of grey to gold,
Gives bloom to a cheek grown pallid.

And, much as our hearts forget,
That day will leave us never,
When two lives, like the waters met,
To flow in one stream for ever !

SONG—THE SILVER CUP.

Oh, rare and quaint the shape it wears,
Strange tracings round it twine,
A relic bright of by-gone years,
This silver cup of mine!
I think how many a gallant here
Pledged eyes long dead and dim,
How many a careless cavalier
Laughed gaily o'er the brim ;
And, as I drain this wine to thee,
A dream my heart steals o'er,
And every beauteous face I see
This cup has pledged of yore.
Bright eyes long dead, again are bright,
Soft glances round me fall ;
O love, fear not ; I pledge to-night
The fairest eyes of all.
Oh, kiss the cup and pledge me, dear !
No time our hearts can sever ;
Life's wine grows old, and lips turn cold,
But love shall live for ever.

LOVE'S LAURELS.

LOVE, had we lived when the times were ringing
Loud with the battle and fierce with fray,
Warriors striving and minstrels singing
Daring deeds of a by-gone day,
You might have sat as a Queen of Beauty;
I, in the lists, as your chosen knight,
Flaunted your favour and vowed you duty,
Borne me the best in the bitter fight.
With my sword-arm nerved by her loving glances,
Who could have wrested from me the prize?
Safe had I come from the splintered lances
Claiming my guerdon from those dear eyes.

Love, there is never a leaf of laurel
Left for the sword-blade to reap in fray—
Men are the wiser, and cease to quarrel:
Little the gifts I can bring to-day.
Only, I bring you, with heart impassioned,
A red, red rose-bud my lips have pressed;
Only this song that my love has fashioned,
Winged by the music to reach your breast.
Simple, indeed, are the gifts I bear her;
Great is my guerdon, I hold no fear;
But her heart will take them, and find them dearer
Than the noblest spoil of a knightly spear.

LIFE FOR LIFE.

WHERE she, from dreary morn till wakeful night,
 Untired, unaided, wrestled with the foe,
 Till Death, perforce, must fly, but in his flight
 Struck at her heart a cruel and recreant blow,
 He knelt—his soul by such a tempest tost
 As man may only weather once and live—
 He knelt, from that dear life, his life had cost,
 To catch the last soft words her love might give.

* * * * *

“Could they hide the truth, as they fain would do,
 I could read it, love, in your sad, sad eyes;
 Each kiss from your lips breathes the thought
 anew—

‘The last perchance ere my darling dies.’
 I can hear it sound in your heart’s deep moan,
 In the sigh you would stifle but cannot quell,
 And feel in the fingers around my own
 The touch of a last farewell.

“No answer, love. But you bow your head,
 And lashes are wet as they brush my cheek;
 You weep. Yet I know, if my eyes must shed
 Some tears at the last, ’tis of joy they speak—
 Joy that a life like mine is wrought
 In a death that only a gain assures,
 A life not taken—laid down, unsought,
 And given, they say, for yours.

“How could I happier die to-night?

What greater good in this world could be
Than to ransom from Death, at a price so
light,

That life far dearer than life to me?
'Tis a little gift, sweet love, I give;
Believe me, you reckon the cost too dear:
How could I live, if you did not live,
In a loveless world and drear?

“Is it selfish to joy that I die like this,

And that you must live? Have I taken
more

Away than I leave you of peace and bliss?
Have I snatched the gold from our life's joint
store?

Do I leave you the husk whilst I take the
grain?

Mine the happiness, yours the woe?
Is death the pleasure, and life the pain?
Forgive me—it may be so;

“For I leave you, love, to the toil and strife,

Alone, where together our feet have trod,
In that upward struggle of warring life,

And I shall rest still 'neath the grassy sod.
You will come and whisper how life shall fare,
And think of the love that was long ago,
And the daisies above me, perchance, may
bear

Some dreams to the sleep below.

“ Yet kiss me, love, ere the night shall fold
In darkness our sunshine so short and bright ;
Smile once, that my spirit may haply hold
A pleasant dream through the long, long night ;
Round my heart, faint throbbing, those true arms
fling ;
Though the life be failing, the soul is brave,
And the only terror that death can bring
I to part from the life I save ! ”

TO H. M. S.

A GREETING.

SWEET, and sister to be,—my hand
For the first time folded on yours to-day,—
Little indeed might you understand
The welcome no words could say.

For the sake of the one we both hold dear,
For the days to be, for the love to live,
Take, from the depths of a heart sincere,
The greeting I fain would give.

The earth holds blossoms, though none so fair
As the roses glowing in Love's warm June;
The sea hides treasures, yet rich and rare,
Though the pearl is its choicest boon :

So, though I say to your heart, O sweet,
Its rose, its treasure no heart may share,
Save his who has won it ; I dare entreat
Some blossom your love may spare ;

For deeply I gaze in your eyes, and know
Little the time that my heart will take,
Ere the bud of its welcome will gladly blow
To love for your own sweet sake.

A DUEL—(À LA BARRIÈRE).

FACE to face! How my soul has longed
For this hour! Is it better to fire the first—
Whilst my arm is nerved by the life he wronged
And my lips are dry with a deadly thirst?
First or second, the end is clear,
My leaden vengeance will truly play
Its part, and sure as my heart beats here,
His heart will be cold and still to-day.

Face to face! Yet he stands erect,
This man who could dare to call me friend,—
Were his honour stainless, his soul unspecked,
No prouder bearing could courage lend.
A moment only, his fate is stayed,
And yet, I shall weep him for days to be:
Death makes us even; the debt is paid
By the life I claim for his wrong to me.

And she! when they bear him, pale and cold—
Slain for the sake of the sin they wrought—
Will her heart cry out for the days of old,
And deem the fancy too dearly bought?
Will the salt tears spring with a sad relief?
Will she weep the dying, the living loathe?
Or mourn for each with a soul-deep grief?
Or pray, if she dare to?—we need it, both!

O friend, held truest in years ago !
O Love, whose lips to a falsehood swore !
Had this wide world never a joy to show
Save the bliss that brightened my scanty store ?
One wild sin, by the world called sweet,
A few brief moments with rapture filled,
And the end, to-day, in a wreck complete—
Two lives shattered, and one heart stilled.

Perchance, when age upon age shall roll
From the track of Time, we may meet again,
Burnt clear by the fires that purge the soul—
I, the slayer, and he, the slain ;
And, cycles after our souls are bright,
She may come, with her beautiful head bent low,
With sad eyes seeking the realms of light,
Pure with penitence, sweet with woe.

Now—some paces of sunny green
Shortened by vengeance and bridged by hate—
Face to face, there is nought between,
Unless Death's wings for their burden wait.
Well, he knew the wages that sin must bring,
He counted the cost ere the crime was sped,
And, as sure as my shot shall this moment ring,
I shall be living and he will be dead !

THE END.

THE end of life :—from night till dawn
To count each moment as it flies,
Each breath succeeding fainter drawn,
Till droops the soul and heedless lies
At Death's black gate of mysteries,
As languor slays regret and care,
And waxen lids o'er weary eyes
Close, as we drift in darkness—where ?

The end of love :—to joy in sun
A few short months, it may be years ;
Then, autumn calling, one by one
Love's roses fade and fall as nears
A winter dark with chilling fears ;—
A fretting link, a broken chain,
And eyes once deemed too sweet for tears
Left lonely weeping Love the slain.

The end of song :—some little while
To lie on lips of men, until
Some newer strains their hearts beguile,
Then fall to earth forgotten ;—still
An echo left, another's skill
May blend with music meet for fame,
And harp to harp down time may thrill
The song, but not the singer's name.

Let all this be. I live, and find
The world is fair and bright and gay;
I love, and her dear eyes are kind
And tender as the skies in May;
Perchance my idle song may stray
Afar before it droops its wing.
Some time the end must be:—to-day,
Enough; I live, I love, I sing.

ALAS FOR LOVE !

SPRING is with us : my lady's eyes
Have filched the blue from the tender skies.

Summer—above us a broad sun glows :
Her cheeks have rifled the blushing rose.

Brown hues and golden of autumn rare
She has meshed in the web of her silken hair.

But the snow from the wintry clouds above
Lies cold on her bosom. Alas for love !

THE FIRST DISCORD.

ARE we satiate, love, with the sweets of kisses ?

The wealth we wasted at length run out ?

Tired of the triumphs that graced our blisses ?

Broken the fetters we twined about

Love, who standeth 'twixt grief and wonder,

Plumed for the flight with his wings asunder,

As a brow grows black with a frown of thunder,

As a red lip curls in an angry pout ?

Only a month since we fondly swore it,

Crowned in that kingdom we sought with sighs,

Let the earth be dark as the drifts sweep o'er it,

Never a cloudlet can dull our skies.

Never a storm in our lives can gather—

Fondly we swore it, hands clasped together,

In the first full flush of our summer weather,

With Love's sweet sunshine warm in our eyes.

Now on our summer-tide autumn presses,

The rose stops blooming, the leaf hangs sere ;

Worthless the gold of autumnal tresses,

Fading as winter looms dark and drear.

Oh, those bright days when the sun was
glowing,

Sweet with scent of the roses blowing,

Shall we stand asunder and watch them going ?

Love, shall we lose them without a tear ?

When Love, with the skill of a master, blended
The song of our hearts in a soft refrain,—
Is the song forgotten, the music ended,
The tune of our pleasure turned into pain ?
Ah! sweeter the sound of the chords vibrating,
Finer the music his art creating,
Harsher for this on the ear comes grating
The dismal discord marring the strain.

Light though this wind be, its force has shaken
A bud from the garland our glad brows wore ;
Be the discord little, its jar must waken
Fear in our bosoms, unknown before.
Are Life's flowers so thick we dare refuse
them,
Our moments so many we dare to lose them,
Love's gifts so lavish we dare misuse them ?
Kiss, join hands, and be friends once more.

You, fair sinner, with eyes repenting,
Sad with the sorrow no heart may feign ;
I, stern judge, with a brow relenting
As bright tears gather and fall amain,
Clear as the dew on the summer roses,
On your cheeks' red bloom, and your head
reposes
Safe on my bosom, and Love re-closes
Wings, and comes to the lure again.

SIR WALTER OF BRABANT.

JUST a legend for my children, idly woven into
rhyme,
What befell a gay young soldier in the old and
saintly time—
Time it seems, that those not fighting chiefly
spent upon their knees—
Time when hermits, saints, and miracles were
plentiful as peas.

Long before Mill penned his doctrines, long
before the days of Hume,
Long ere Huxley's lamp of science shone to
dissipate the gloom,
Long ere some with scornful gesture, some with
hands that shook with grief,
Drove the rapier keen of logic through the
armour of belief,—

Years ago, in dimmer ages, lived according to
his light,
In the pleasant land of Brabant, one Sir Walter,
gallant knight
Fighting for the Holy Virgin, counting earthly
loss as gain,
Keeping armour brightly burnished, and his soul
without a stain.

Came the feast day of Our Lady, and Sir Walter,
sheathed in steel,
Rode along the gloomy forest fully armed from
head to heel.

To the tourney goes Sir Walter, seeking not an
earthly fame,
But as Mary's knight victorious, to glorify her
name.

Bidding Christian folk to worship in the ivy-
grown chapelle,
Through the forest, rising, falling, came the ca-
dence of a bell.
Paused the knight, and in the music clearly heard
the voice divine
Of the Queen of Heaven claiming adoration at
her shrine.

Jeered his comrades at his fancy—strove to bend
him to their way,—
“Hear the Mass to-morrow, Walter; shine within
the lists to-day.”
“When our Holy Lady calls me, what to me a
fading crown?
Ride without me, noble comrades; win the guer-
don and renown.”

Hushed the bell as in the chapel kneels he in his
armour bright,
Seeks the Queen of Heaven's favour, vows him-
self again her knight;
High the Mass and long the Gospel, yet he
banished earthly thought,
Though he knew the morn was waning, and the
fight was nearly fought.

Then he sought the field of tourney. Splintered
lances on the ground
Spoke the shrewdness of the battle. Stalwart
warriors flocked around,
Crying, "Ransom, noble Walter, victor in this
gallant fight :
Thine our armour, thine our horses—name the
ransom, gentle knight."

"Not a claim have I for ransom. I have fought
no glorious fray,
Not a lance shaft have I shivered, never sword
have drawn to-day."
"Nay, we knew the crest above thee, knew the
armour, knew the shield :
Jesting ill befits a victor to the vanquished in
the field."

Humbly then he crossed his bosom, bowed in
holy awe his head,
Knew, whilst at her shrine he worshipped, Mary's
angel in his stead
Fought in arms his own resembling, bore to
victory his crest.
Thus Our Lady showed her kindness to the
knight who loved her best.

Then, in after years, Sir Walter laid his coat of
mail aside,
As a monk lived pure and holy, till in sanctity
he died
In that faith *he* found so simple (harder now for
me and you) ;
And Cæsarius wrote the story, and declares the
legend true.

SONG—NIGHT AND MORNING.

I WOKE last night from a fitful sleep ;
The moon, through my casement, looked wan
and pale :
I watched till the storm clouds dark and deep
Spread over her sweet white face as a veil—
Then my heart was sad as the sombre sky,
Till a rift in the driven clouds set free
One star, that, bright as a loving eye,
Came out of the darkness and smiled on me ;
And I cried, " Though stormy my life to-night
And dark as the drift above,
One star through its cloud gleams fair and
bright—
That star is the star of my love ! "

Then I slept once more, and a sweet dream came ;
For I saw my love, and her steadfast eyes
I fancied were lit by the same clear flame
As the star so fair in the cloudy skies.
I woke, and I knew that the storm had fled
And sunshine lay on the earth again,
And the twining rose near my window shed
A fresher scent from the midnight rain ;
And I cried, " O love, you are far away,
But true as the heaven above :
Last night shone a star, and I know to-day
That star was the star of our love."

SONG—A HUNDRED YEARS AGO !

WHEN this old oak was in its prime,
With life in every bough,
Young hearts would beat in Spring's sweet time
As ours are beating now ;
The longing look, the tender word
That set your cheek aglow,
Oh, many a lassie saw and heard
A hundred years ago !
And though our world grown old, so old,
And changed for weal or woe,
Love tells to-day the tale he told
A hundred years ago !

Oh, many a touch of timid feet
This woodland path has known !
Oh, many a cheek has blushed as sweet
As blushes now your own !
Beneath these branches' kindly shade
Soft voices whispered low,
As many a youth wooed many a maid
A hundred years ago !
And though our world grown old, so old,
And changed for weal or woe,
Love tells to-day the tale he told
A hundred years ago !

TWO WORLDS.

TO A SUCCESSFUL POET.

RANG through my soul the manly strain,
Great thoughts and noble robed in grace
I read, then turned the page again
To look upon the singer's face.

And deemed the meaning there I caught
Of massive brows, of dreamy eyes
Far gazing over fields of thought,
And culling tuneful mysteries.

Now here, I said, is one whom Fame
Has bidden stand beside her throne;
And here am I, who bear a name
As yet unhonoured and unknown.

Yet once, as mine, his heart ran through
The gamut, sounding hope and fear,
And wondered if the song, so true,
And tuneful to the singer's ear,

Would soar on broad strong wing and bear
The thrilling music far and wide,
Or feebly beat the languid air
And die, as many a song has died.

I thought, now, should my voice be heard,
And should I, careless of the shame
Of failure, gather strength and gird
Myself to strike a blow for fame,

Then will I pen as this some rhyme,
And, haply, he may read and say,
“I know the voice that on a time
A greeting sent, half grave, half gay;”

Resent, perchance, or understand
The thought that bade the lip to speak,
And, stretching forth a kindly hand,
Bend down, the strong, to aid the weak:

It may be powerful to raise
Some rugged stone that stays my feet;
It may be but the word of praise
To every child of song so sweet.

For sometimes, gleaming from afar,
High o'er the world his worth has won,
I catch the brightness of a star,
And whisper “Courage, heart—sing on!”

A LAND OF DREAMS.

SAIL, sail in a barque, spirit-guided,
Far, far through the watches at night ;
Perchance, you may pass, where divided,
Lies darkness from regions of light,
And find, and shall joy to have found it,
A land fringed with summer-green trees,
A magical island, and round it
A girdle of luminous seas.

White pebbles fair beaches are strewing,
Long stretches lie inland of green,
Glad flowers through the shadows are wooing
The sun-rays that flicker between ;
Rare perfumes no heart has the knowing,
Strange music no soul yet has stirred,
Each blossom to blossom is throwing,
Each bird singing softly to bird.

Bright waves shall your barque bear, caressing,
Soft, soft till the keel touches shore,
When cares that your heart were distressing
Shall sink in a deep nevermore.
Oh land, and your life shall be dearer !
Oh rest, and your sleep shall be sweet !
And, waking, the dawn shall be clearer,
And redder the flowers at your feet.

You shall wake, and a joy shall elate you,
And, seeking you know not, shall rove
To a bower where a maiden shall wait you ;
Her eyes are the eyes that you love,—
Has life been a failure, to cheer you ;
Successful, to crown you with praise ;
And love shall be endless and near you,
In this island of wonderful days.

If you long for this land—to be near it—
This region of colour and light,
Take the barque and the spirit to steer it,
Sail deep through the watches of night.
Sail, sail till the darkness is dying,
Where, circled by marvellous gleams,
Perchance, this sweet island is lying,
This magical land of my dreams !

FORGOTTEN STRAINS.

A SIMPLE song, a wayside flower,
May please the heart at idle times,
And she, to pass a leisure hour,
With listless eyes may read my rhymes,

And catch some music, almost fled,
So faint it grows, of by-gone strains,
Sad echoes of a tune long dead,
An empty heart through life retains.

Notes long unheard those hours recall
When music made the charm complete ;
From perfumes long forgotten fall
The very thoughts that made them sweet :

So, may she read and think of me,
And one fair spring, long dead, long wept ;
When, tuned in love's melodious key,
That harp my ardent fingers swept.

Perchance, and backwards turn, to trace
Paths long untrod, where shadows sleep,
And clear again one sunny space
Where faded flowers of love lie deep.

And view, with saddened, softened gaze,
Times dearest to my memory,
When those sweet eyes of other days
Were lustrous with their love for me.

And, truly now, her heart may deem
These songs I sing are cold and still,
To songs I shaped for one sweet theme,
When love could wing the words at will.

Ah! then I sang for meed of worth,
The wages love might rightly claim;
But now my harp is sad on earth,
Unstrung to love, unknown to fame.

A WELCOME.

ALL westward borne and gaily curled
The waves, and fair the breezes blew
That wafted her from this old world
To win the new.

And now glad waves, ere far behind
You fly in tracks of whitened foam,
Speak as you pass the greeting kind
That waits at home.

PROSERPINE IN HADES.

A QUEEN, in robes of night arrayed,
She rules the realms below,
An empire lost in endless shade
And boundless in its woe.
From her young life the sunshine flown,
From her sweet eyes the smiles,
For love that bade her share a throne
No answering love beguiles.
Her waking hours no thoughts distress
Of blue and radiant skies ;
The spell of sad forgetfulness
Lies heavy on her eyes.

Sometimes the scent of earthly flowers
Steals faintly through her dreams,
Sometimes a ray of brighter hours
Through clouded memory gleams,
And then in restless sleep she longs
For bud and bird and breeze,
For rustic flutes and merry songs
Beneath Sicilian trees ;
And sleeping, murmurs, "One short day
Of clear and sunny light
Were worth a hundred years to sway
This sombre realm of night."

THE RETURN OF PROSERPINE.

SHE shall return from the regions of sadness,
Stronger from slumber the earth shall arise,
Sorrow shall shrink from the smile of her gladness,
Darkness shall quail at the sun in her eyes.
Peace shall be with her and wealth on her traces,
Plenty shall fall from her bountiful hand,
Music and song in the desolate places
Waking and spreading their wings through the
land— She shall return !

Conquering Night that restrained her and bound
her,
Breaking the mystical fetters and strong,
Come with a girdle of sunshine around her,
Come with a garment of rapturous song,
Calling the blossoms again to the meadows,
Robing the woodlands and valleys in green,
Chasing the tear-drops and sporting with shadows,
Worshipped as goddess and crowned as a queen—
She shall return !

THE LAND ACROSS THE SEA.

SANDS, lightly swept as breezes curl and play,
Choking the grass that struggling seeks to free
Some thirsty blades, lie at my back to-day :
Starts from my feet a stretch of sullen sea.

And inland reaches far a waste and drear
Of rugged land I lack the heart to till,
Or wit to work :—though some may hold it dear,
To me all melancholy, mute, and still.

A dreary shore ! The morn broke on me here
Fresh from a dream of regions lying bright
Across the wave : lands warm and sweet and fair
Shining afar in gleams of mystic light.

At times I catch, borne faintly on the breeze,
Soft, dying notes of welcome those may claim
Whose daring spirits win the baffling seas,
And land 'mid ringing trumpet-blasts of fame.

At morn I laughed, and said, "Long hours are
mine ;
The day is young, be skilful, strong and brave ;
Shape fast a keel, and noontide's sun may shine
Bright on the sails that speed thee o'er the wave."

The noon is here—I gaze with wistful eyes
 Across the sea : my toil-worn hands and sore
Hang idly down, and sad, my spirit cries,
 “ Rest, rest and dream ; you may not gain the
 shore.”

I start, I wake ; the day is on the wane ;
 The sun turns, wearied of his upward flight ;
With eager hands I fall to work again,
 Dreading the darkness of the coming night.

Fashion the planks, O soul ; nor fear to fail ;
 Launch bravely forth amid the breakers' foam ;
Blow seawards, kindly gales, fill out the sail,
 And waft me over ere the night shall come !

THE END.

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